

Altina the Sword Princess vol.12

by Yukiya Murasaki

Novel Updates

Translator: **Skythewood**

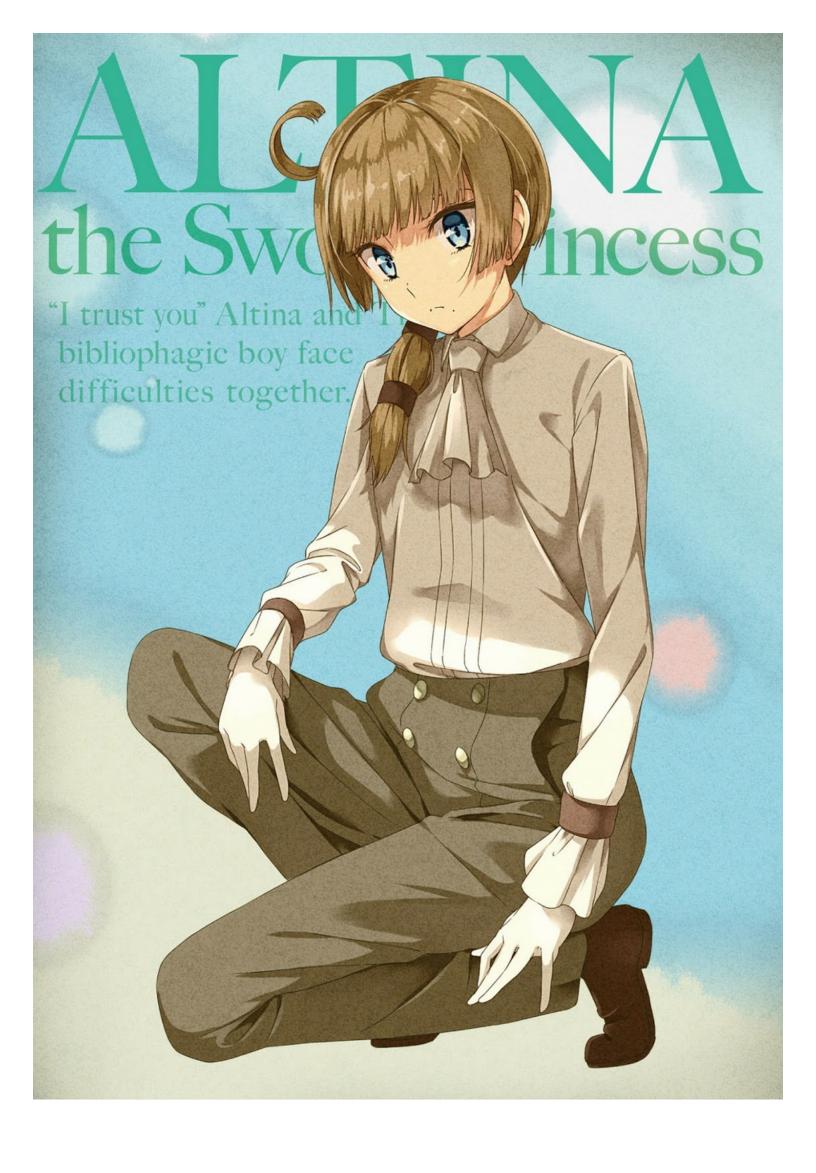
Epub: Trollo WN/LN EPUB





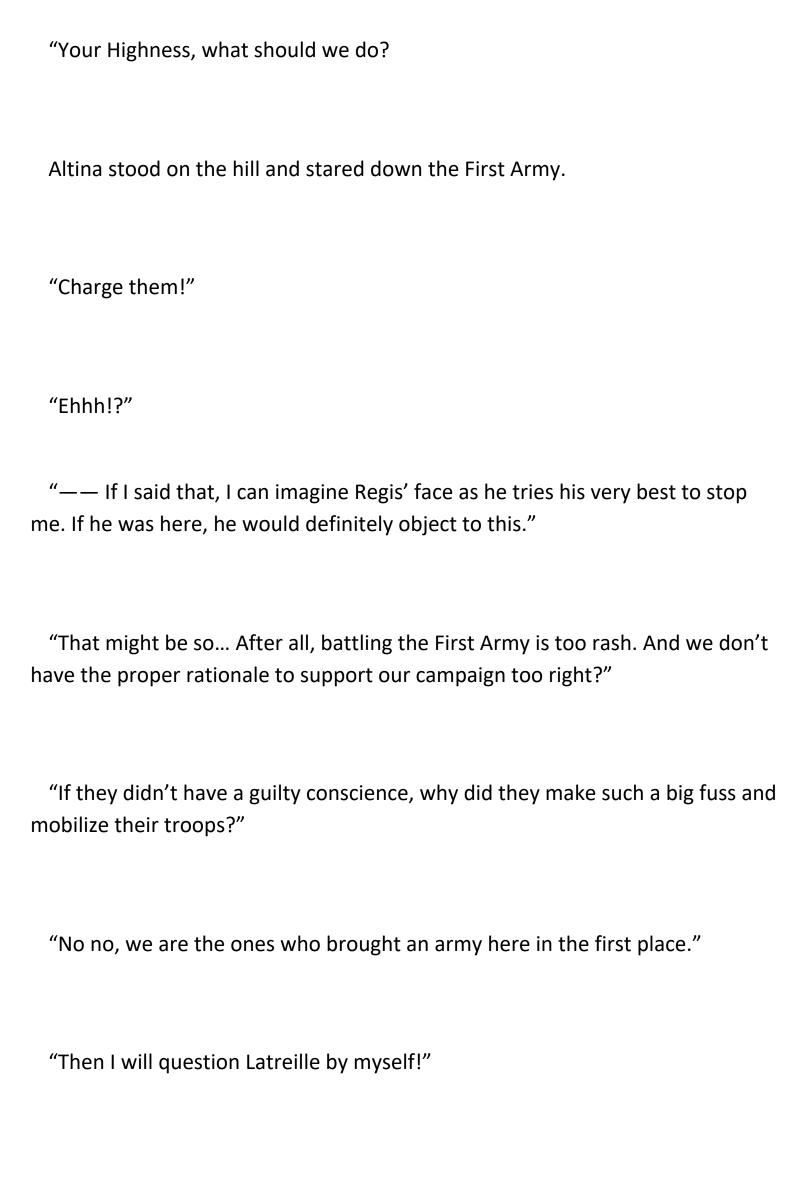


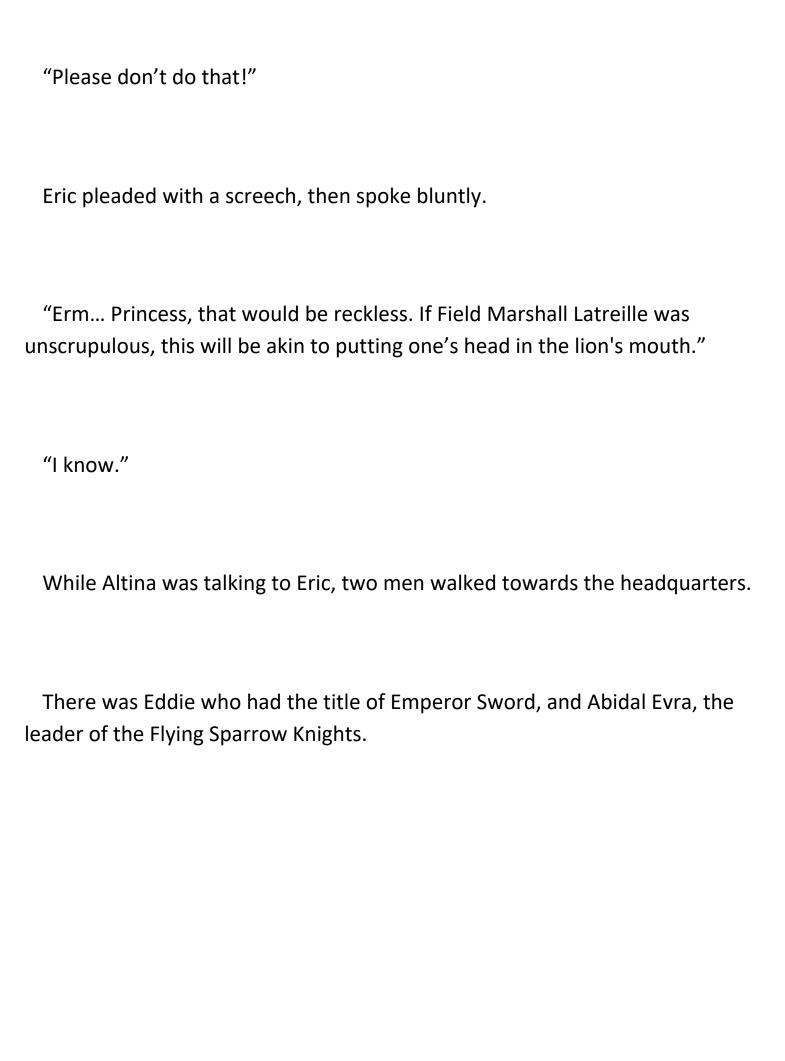




Prologue: The War Conference that was late

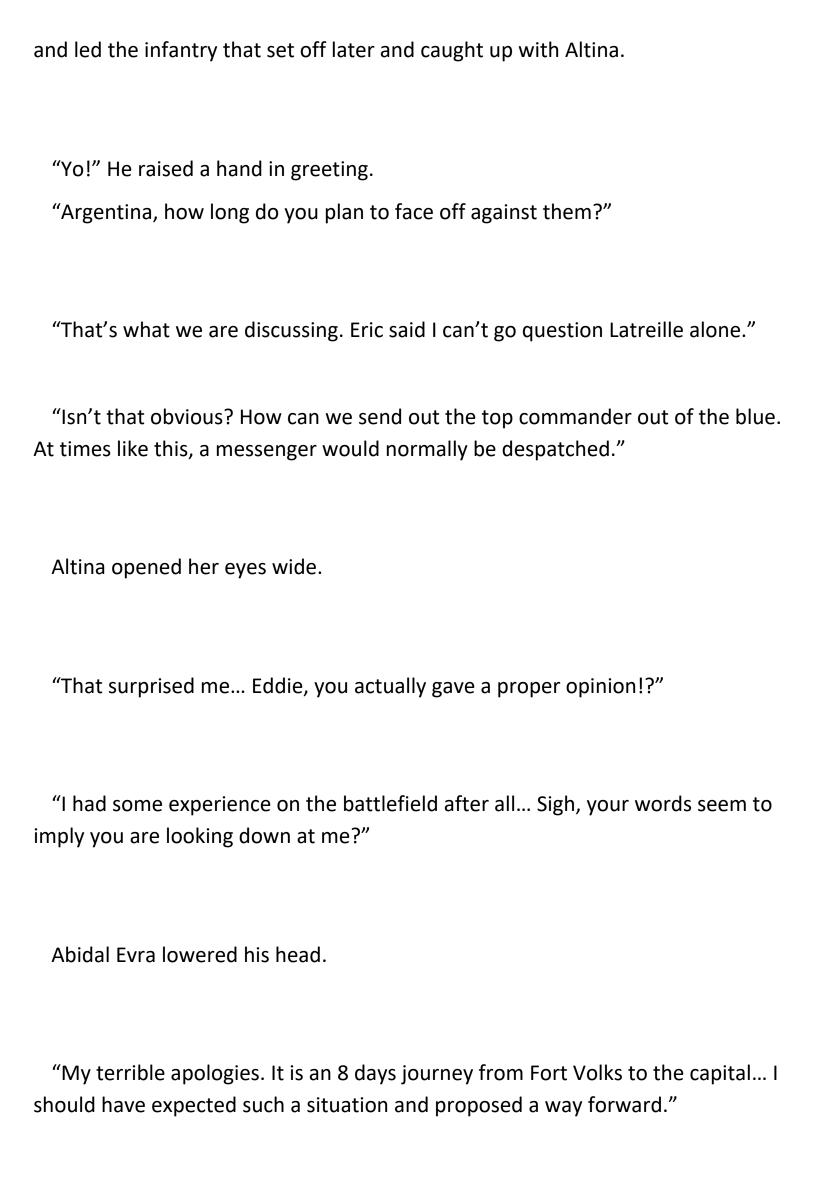
Imperial Year 851, August 12th. Evening——
The Fourth Army formed up on the eastern hill. They had 500 cavalry and 4,000 infantry.
To intercept them, the First Army set up formation at the foot of the hill. 1,000 cavalry and 10,000 infantry.
Be it numbers, training or equipment, the First Army had the upper hand.
However, the gallant victories the Fourth Army won in the High Britannian War had already spread across the entire Empire.
Although Latreille would be coronated as the new emperor tomorrow, the imperial capital Versailles was shrouded in a tense atmosphere.
The Fourth Army Headquarters——
Eric, the escort rifleman asked:

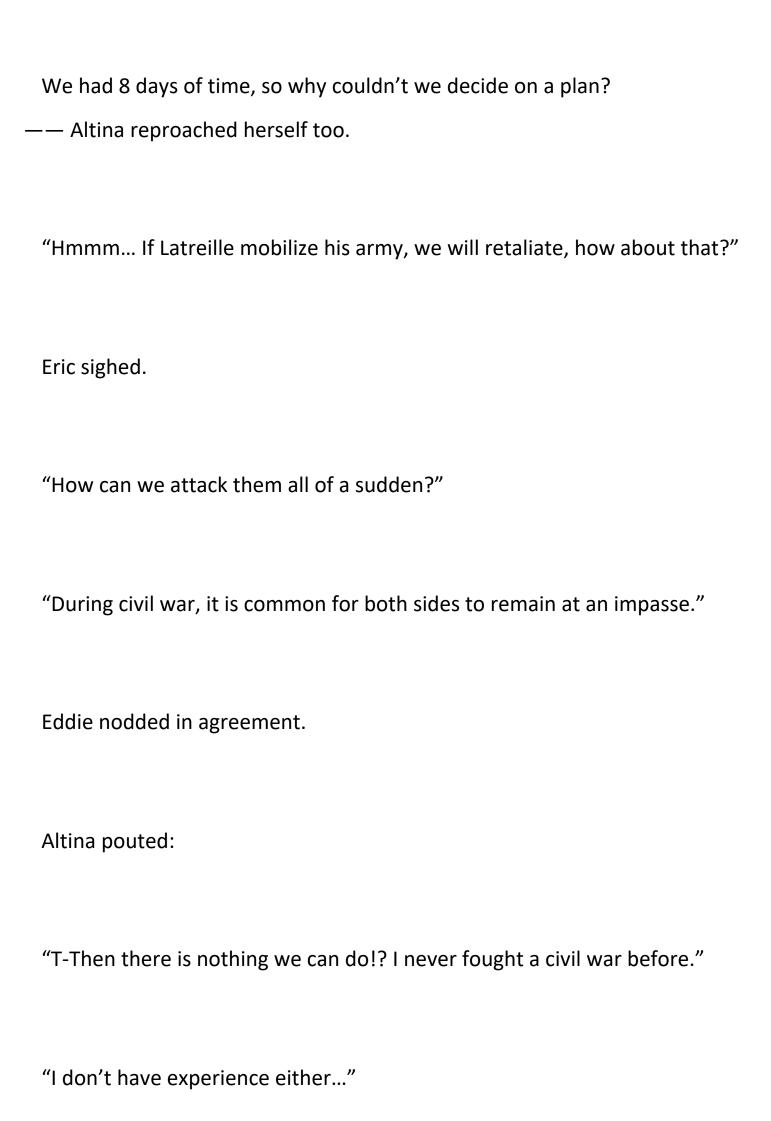


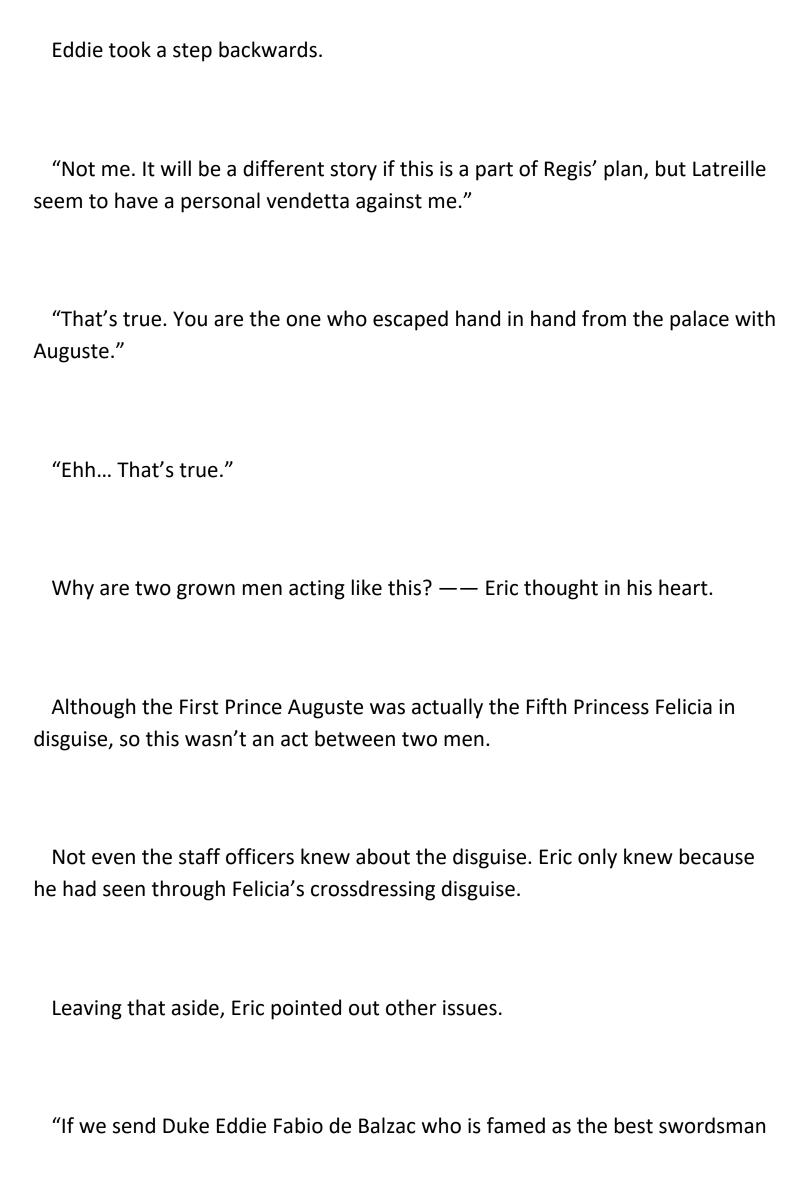


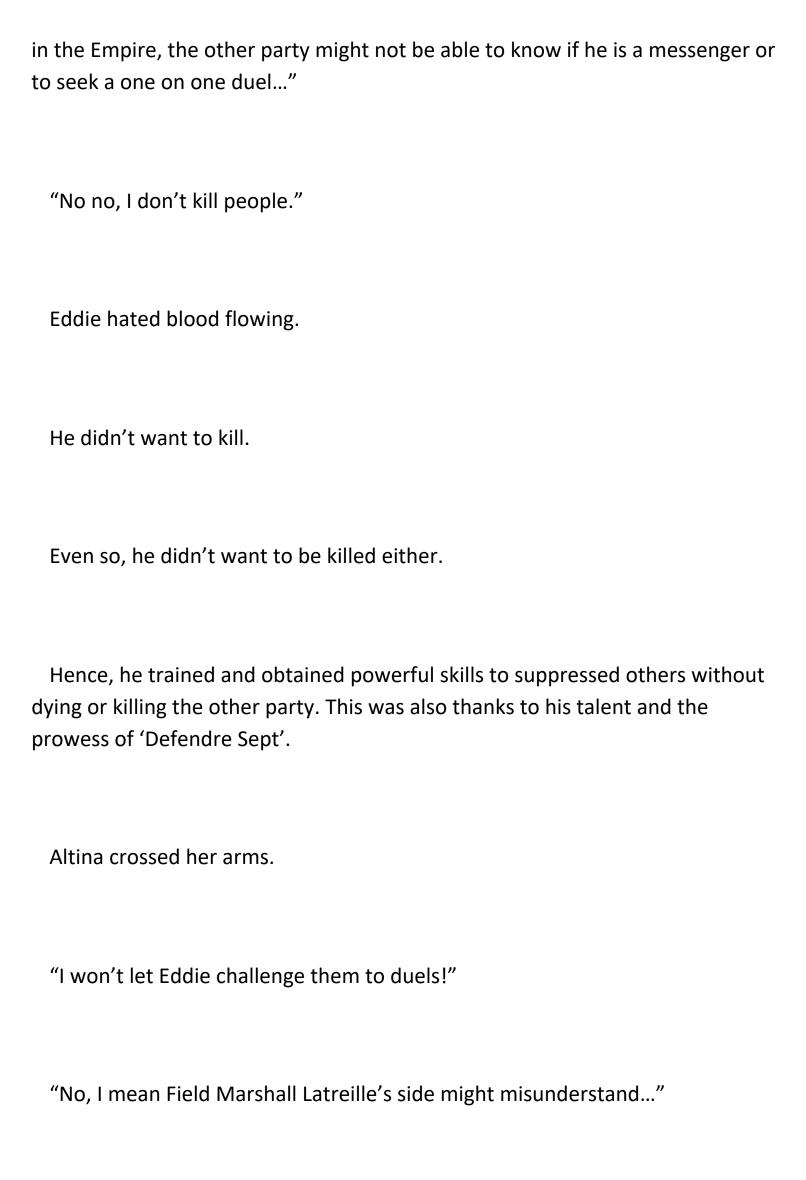


Although Eddie was assigned to stay at the fort, he had his own ideas about it

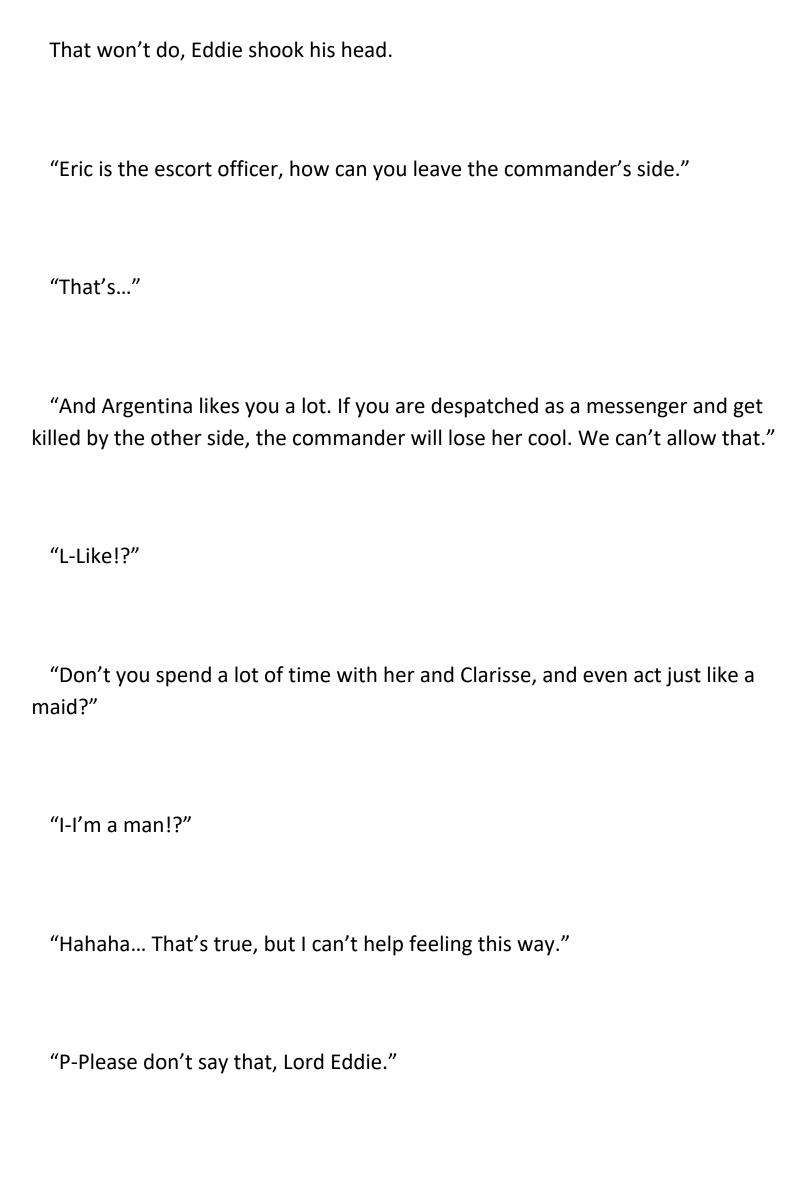




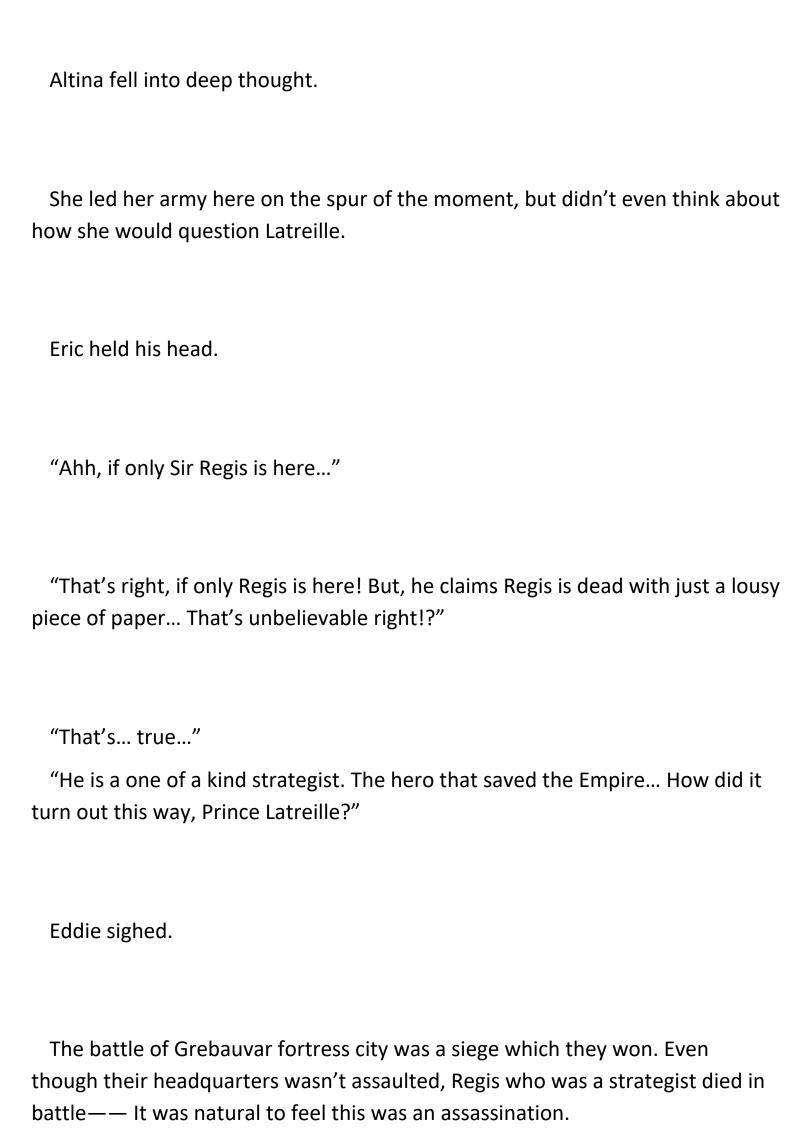




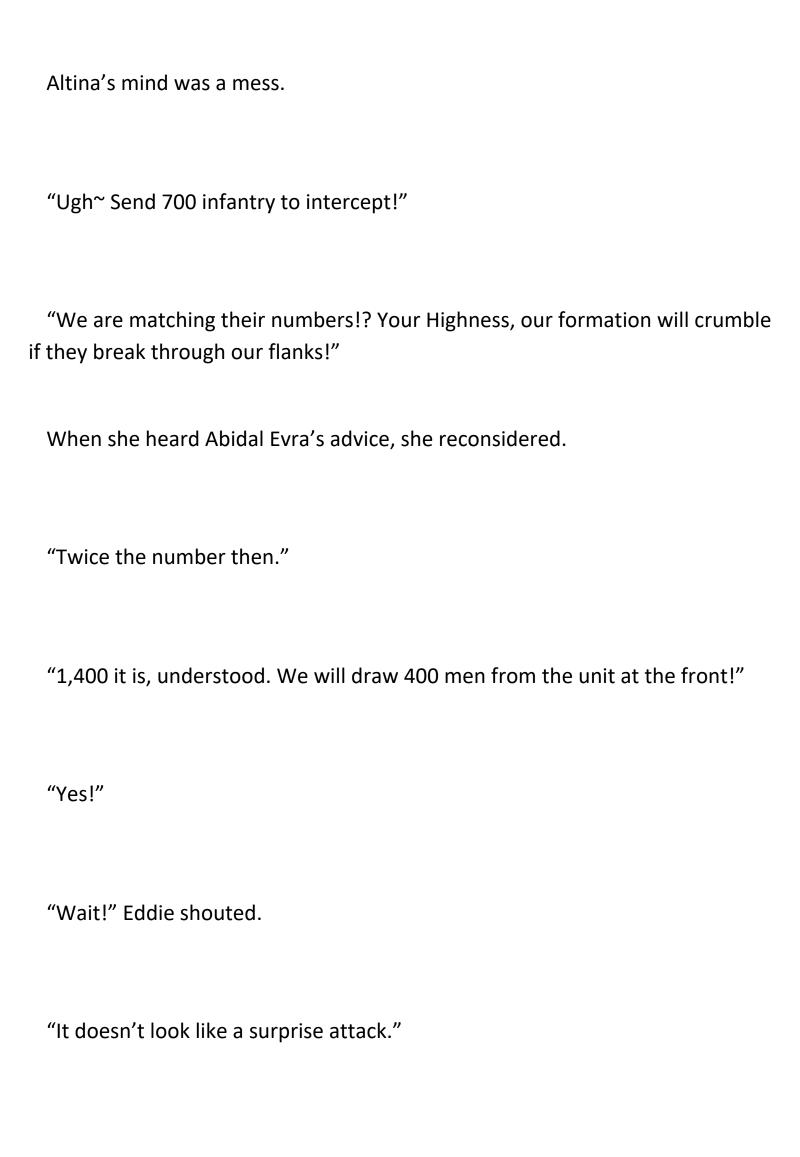


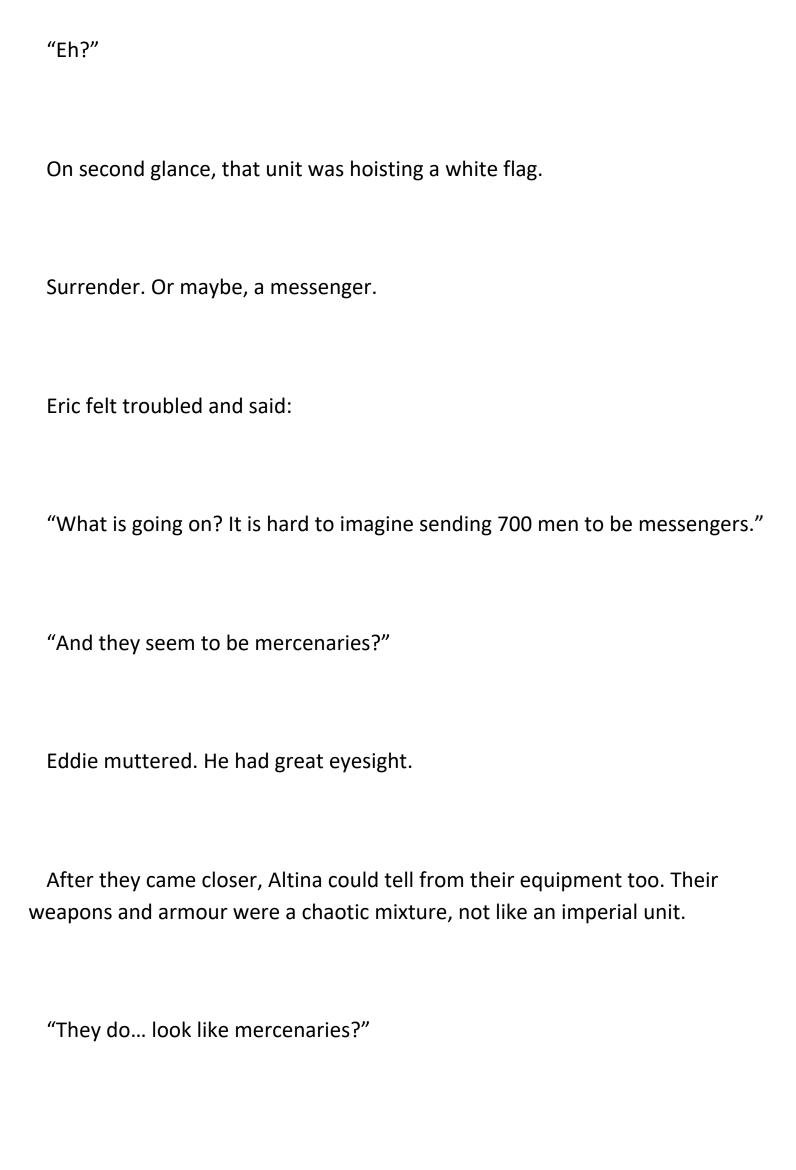


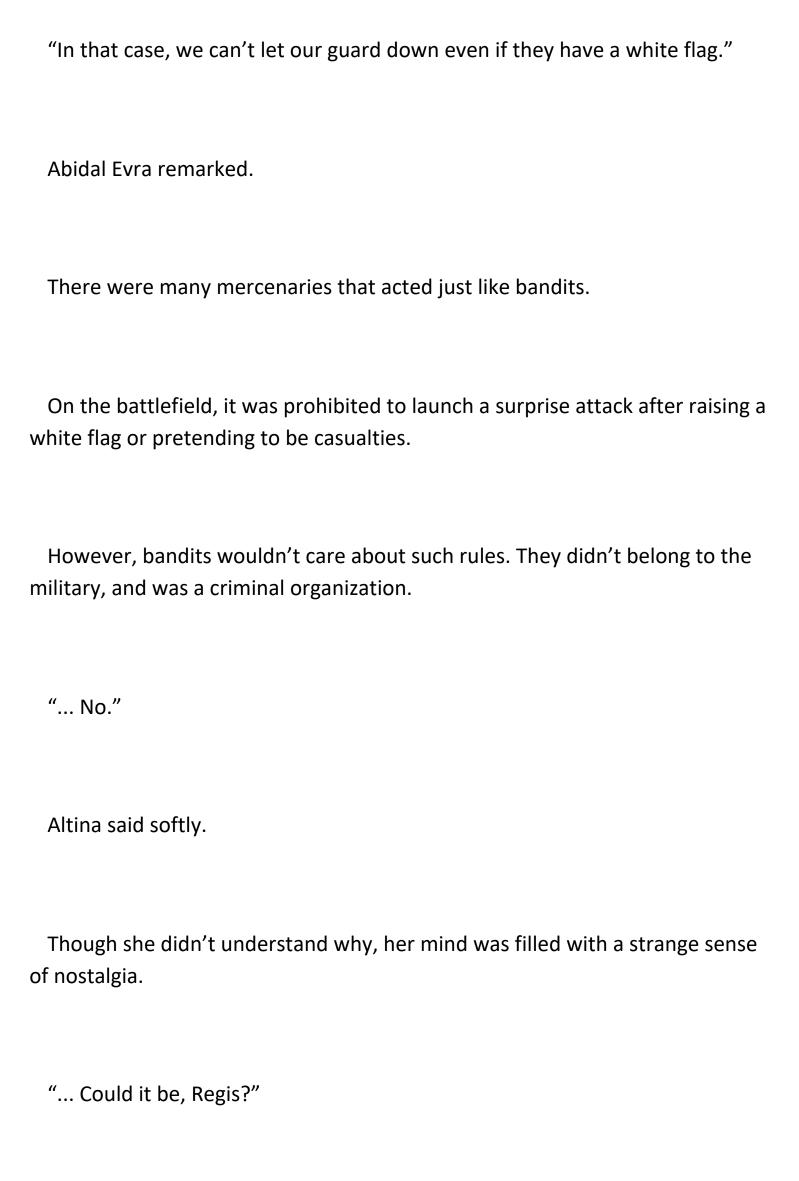












Ehh!? The people around her yelped in surprise.

Shortly after, they realized that Altina's instinct proved to be correct.

Chapter 1: Thunderclap

Four hours ago——

Regis felt really blissful now.

On the morning of the 12th, the newspaper with the testimony of Royal Chamberlain Beclard was published.

The capital turned rowdy when this serious allegation appeared suddenly before the coronation.

A lot of citizens pressed the palace for answers but no one from the administration stood up to clarify the situation.

Everything was going just as planned.

Regis was immersed in his book as he sipped coffee inside the beverage section of Carol's bookshop.

His letter should reach Fort Volks in another few days. On it was news that Regis was still alive and the plans from now on, written in code.

So he could spend his days peacefully for now — at least that was his plan.

Fanrine came running in a panic.

"Sir Regis!"

"Sigh... Please don't do that, you're too loud!?"

"Wahh, sorry! Ms Regina, something terrible is happening!"

In order to hide his identity within the capital, Regis was still crossdressing. Even though he could leave the capital now, he still went to the bookshop and immersed himself in it with the excuse of collecting information. If he could read, he wouldn't mind crossdressing.

"... What's the matter, Ms Fanrine? Is there anything more terrifying than being lectured loudly by the bookshop owner?"

"Princess Argentina's cavalry has formed up on the hill to the east of the capital!"

"Wh—— What!?"

His blissful time lasted less than half a day.

They then rushed back towards the basecamp of 《Renard Pendu》.

By the way, the third prince Bastian, his friend Elize, the activist Bourgine, news reporter Claude, the injured Franziska and her younger sister Martina stayed behind in the capital.



Jessica who was leading the mercenaries glared at Regis.

Her face was beautiful, but there was a shroud of intimidation in her expression.

"Lord Auric, you're late. The sun is almost setting."

"W-Well, I already informed you of the situation on my side via mail... Didn't you receive them yet?"

"You probably just want to read books anyway."

"Ugh..."

They only met for a short time, but she saw right through him. Her title of 'Magician' wasn't just for show. Her observation skills were even better than Regis'.

She laid out the map.

"The fourth army has 500 cavalry, and the 4000 infantry behind them have formed up at the hill to the east... The First Army's 《White Hare Knight》 is positioned at the bottom of the hill."

"When I left the city, I saw them mustering the infantry. The First Army will probably send out 10,000 soldiers. Maybe they had already moved out? After all, we left from the other side of the capital and made a detour here, so we took quite a long time."

"Is Princess Argentina trying to start a civil war?"

"No way..."

"It's your problem though?"

"Well, I already mailed out a letter... From the situation here, they probably missed it."

"What should we do? Watch from the sidelines?"

"We can't do that! Let's link up with the princess."

Jessica was probably expecting Regis to say that and nodded.

"As promised, we will aid you."

The mercenaries were already prepared to set off, and could do so immediately.

Regis was adamant on going even if he had to go alone, so he gladly accepted their help.

After leaving the basecamp, they headed for the eastern hills.

They were about 700 strong.

Regis, Fanrine and Jessica sat together inside a shaky carriage. It goes without saying that Regis couldn't ride a horse.

The driver said:

"Deputy commander, the Fourth Army is in sight!"

"What should we do, Lord Auric?"

"Please raise the white flag! We will be attacked if we continue to advance like this."

"Aye Sir!"

Fortunately, the First Army didn't make any moves, and Regis' group reached the Fourth Army safely.

No, it wasn't certain that things would end safely yet...

The soldiers of the Fourth Army raised their lances and raised their bows against the mercenaries they had never seen before.

One false move and they would probably be attacked.

Regis alighted from their box carriage.

He recognized some of the soldiers.

If they noticed Regis, they would probably report to Altina.

Regis waved.

Those soldiers blushed.

Their reaction was different from what he expected.

Even though they were the Fourth Army's soldier he knew.

He thought the mood would be like returning home, but something seems off.

As if he went into the wrong house.

Fanrine who was standing behind him whispered:

"... Sir Regis, your attire!"

"Ahh?!"

He completely forgot. Regis didn't look like a strategist right now. Even sharp eyed reporters couldn't see through his disguise.

But what would the soldiers think if he took off his wig here...

The column of imperial soldiers parted.

Someone walked forth from the depths of the unit.

Her fiery vermillion hair swayed, and a sword larger than her body was hung on her shoulder. Crimson eyes stared Regis' way.

"...Regis?"

"Sigh... A-Altina!"

"Regis! Regis! Regis! Regis! Regis!"

The young girl sprinted over and caught him in an embrace.

With all her might——

"Croak", Regis made a sound like a frog being squashed.

Headquarters of the Imperial Fourth Army——

There were 6 people in the tent.

They were Regis, Altina, Eddie, Abidal Evra, Jessica and Fanrine. Eric stood guard at the entrance.

Altina who had finally calmed down glared at Regis.

He was getting glared by ladies all day.

"Well? What happened? Regis who is supposed to have died in battle

according to Latreille's report turned into a woman and is together with the mercenaries who were our enemy... Ah, I don't get this at all!"

"... Yes, you have a point."

It was natural for her to be confused.

Regis' expression relaxed when he saw Altina like this.

"What, why are you all smiles!?"

"Eh? Do I really look like that? How troubling..."

"Does seeing me troubled amuse you so much?"

"... I'm just happy about seeing you again."

"What?!"

Altina's face turned beet red.

Wahaha, Eddie laughed.

"That's a great line! I will say this to that person after I return to Fort Volks."

His beloved Fifth Princess stayed behind in the fortress.

Regis said in a panic:

"Wahh... N-No, that's not what I mean...!!"

"You have a way with words after becoming a woman, Regis."

"Please don't tease me, Lord Eddie."

After the conversation became like this, a cold voice interjected: "... Is it fine to be this relaxed? The sun is setting. Do you want to continue this stand off?"

Jessica asked in a cold tone as usual.

Regis smiled wryly.

"... It's true that there isn't any reason for this stand off. We should let the soldiers sleep in a warm place tonight. Anyone has pen and paper?"

A maid entered the tent.

As if she knew what Regis needed, a full set of stationery was placed on the tray.

Regis gasped.

"Ah..."

" "

Clarisse was the one who placed the tray on the table.

When others were present, she would be expressionless. Despite that, Regis still noticed that the corners of her eyes were a little red, and there were tear stains.

A smile appeared on Regis' face.

"Thank you. Ms Clarisse. Erm... I'm back."

"..... Yes. Welcome back."

She then added 'Sir Regis' in a barely audible voice. After bowing deeply, she left the tent as if nothing had happened.

Altina shrugged.

"Even though it's been a long time since you two met, shouldn't you speak a little more?"

"... It's fine."

The joy of finding him safe meant much more than words.



Regis picked up the pen.

—— This is the one I have always been using.

The grip felt familiar. This was the pen usually used which was left behind in Fort Volks.

Even though the death notification was received and the army mobilized, Clarisse still believed. Believed that Regis was still alive, and the time when he will use this pen will come again.

Or maybe, she wanted to lay it besides his grave...

Regis thought about this as he started writing.

He finished in no time, scrolled the letter up and used stamp Altina's seal on the wax.

Jessica remarked coldly again:

"You have no hesitation in using the Princess' seal."

"Haha... Because Altina will fail once in every three times she seal a letter."

"You even used a nickname."

"I hope you don't misunderstand..."

Regis actually said "Altina" in the presence of so many people.

It would be bad if this start a weird rumour amongst the troops, so he would address her formally in public. However, the staff officers in the Fourth Army already knew about their relationship.

"I'm just Altina's strategist. We're just not used to being too formal with each other."

"I'm used to others speaking to me formally though."

His words were unexpectedly refuted.

"U... Huh?"

"But since it's Regis, I allowed it."

"... T-Thank you."

"I did ask you to be my strategist, but I also hope you can be my comrade with the same goal in mind."

"Yes... I feel the same way. To share the same dream."

Jessica nodded.

"... I understand the special relationship between the two of you."

"It's a bit hard to explain."

"It's fine. At least, I can tell you two are not lovers."

"I-Is that so?"

"Just who do you think I am?"

As expected of the renown strategist of the mercenary band 《Renard Pendu》.

Abidal Evra frowned.

"Well... There is no question that Sir Auric is an exceptional talent. But neglecting the proper protocol is a bit..."

Eddie patted his shoulder.

"It's fine! They just need to keep their act together during ceremonies and duties."

"War conference is also part of their duties though."

"It's fine since Argentina wants it to be so. Regis will feel more relaxed too right? Instead of protocol, unity is more important."

"I-Indeed..."

If they change their way of doing things and Regis' capability is restricted, then the future of the Fourth Army would be doomed.

Regis lowered his head.

"My apologies, it's all my fault."

Abidal Evra frowned again.

"Ugh... Sir Auric, I understand the rationale why you don't use honorifics when addressing the princess. In that case, can you do so when you speak with

me? I feel that I am the one who should be apologizing for offending you earlier."

"Ahahaha... I will do my best... No, I will give it my best shot yo."

Altina got back on topic.

"Have you finished the letter?"

Speaking of which, Regis only said 'We should let the soldiers sleep in a warm place tonight'.

"Yes, this is for Prince Latreille."

"So we need to send an envoy? We already thought about that. But who should we send?"

"Eh?? Anyone will do."

"Really!?"

"It's just this bit of distance, so a new recruit will do."

"How should we question Latreille? Like 'did you murder Regis' or something? Ah, speaking of which, he didn't."

After all, Regis was still alive and kicking before her.

Regis said with an awkward smile:

"No... I think he already tried. If not, news of me dying in battle wouldn't have spread."

"Ah, is that so!?"

"Well, let's talk about this later... First is the matter of the envoy. At this distance, we can just pass the letter to them directly. They can reply via mail too."

"Is that so?"

"Sorry, it's my mistake. I should have assigned someone familiar with this as your deputy. For the Fourth Army, that would be Lord Edvard."

"Ahh, I see."

Although he had assumed the post of fort defence commander for now, he

was actually an experienced veteran. He was also a trusted lieutenant of Jerome, so he should be familiar with negotiations too.

They couldn't spend all day talking.

Regis summoned a messenger soldier, and instructed him to deliver the letter to the Imperial First Army.

Altina tilted her head.

"What did you write?"

"Eh?! Didn't I show it to you before I seal it with wax?!"

"Ahaha... I was only looking at Regis."

"I-I see."

Regis started to blush.

"I was wondering if you were actually translucent."

"I'm not a ghost."

Ahaha, Altina and Eddie laughed.

Abidal Evra probably wasn't used to their interactions and appeared a little tense. Jessica probably guessed what Regis wrote, and just sipped on her tea without appearing bothered.

Eric continued his guard duty without moving.

Fanrine who was seated at the end of the table raised a hand.

"I'm curious too. What did you write, Sir Regis?"

"Well... The first part is about me. "I had to leave the battlefield because of pressing matters, and sincerely apologize for any inconvenience caused to the Field Marshal and commander of the First Army." I also wrote that I have made it back to the Fourth Army safely."

"You didn't mention anything about them listing you as killed in action?"

"Even if we don't complain about this, they will still apologize and correct the records. After all, people being listed as killed in action when they are actually alive happens occasionally."

"But Prince Latreille attempted to assassinate you."

"I don't have any evidence."

Or rather, if they delve deeper into the matter, the fact that mercenaries from 《Renard Pendu》 had killed the sentries would be uncovered.

There was no point in pursuing this matter.

Altina smiled:

"But this will definitely shock Latreille — receiving a letter from Regis whom he thought he had killed! It's a pity I won't be able to see his reaction!"

"I don't think he will leave the palace. During his duel against High Britannia's colonel Coulthard he sustained injuries so bad that he couldn't even ride a horse. It would take about two months before he can make a full recovery."

"What?!"

"Seemed like this news didn't spread in the army. He probably didn't want to delay the coronation. Prince Latreille seemed really anxious about this."

"Tomorrow is the coronation..."

"The Imperial Fourth Army is here to congratulate him—— That's what I wrote."

Altina frowned.

"Why must I congratulate him!?"

"... I have to find a reason for mobilizing the unit without orders."

"It's the fault of Latreille who gave me fake news in the first place!"

"You want to report that to the Ministry of Military Affairs?"

"Ugghh..."

She looked enraged, but suppressed her emotions. She had grown after I was forced to leave her—— Regis thought.

Although he wished she was composed enough to collect intel before mobilizing the army...

"Well, this situation isn't completely meaningless."

"What do you mean?"

"The people in the capital... especially the nobles. We can draw their attention through the existence of the Fourth Army, which will be beneficial for us in the future."

"Regis, you are showing a devilish face again."

"Really? I can't act like a nice guy either. They almost killed me after all."

"Yes! Ah, by the way, something is bothering me very much."

"What?"

Altina reached her hand out.

And touched his hair.

"Why are you dressed like a girl? Clarisse laughed so hard that she cried."

So those weren't tears of joy from meeting me again!?

He finally knew why the corner of Clarisse's eyes were red.

"No... This is..."

Jessica said softly:

"... Lord Auric asked me to help him crossdress."

"T-That isn't wrong, but putting it that way will lead to misunderstandings?!"

Kekeke... Fanrine tried her best not to laugh.

With no other choice, Regis had to recount his ordeal from the beginning.

Imperial First Army, Field Tent——

When the sun was about to set behind the western hills, a rider hoisting a messenger flag came running.

Germain spoke. As he served as Latreille's eyes, he had the habit of reporting what he sees.

"Prince Latreille, it seems to be a messenger."

"Hmm."

His right eye's vision had recovered, but his left eye remains blind. And the doctor diagnose that his right eye will lose its light one day.

Germain asked:

"Could this be the Fourth Army's declaration of war? Or will they question us about the death of their strategist?"

"No, that won't be."

Latreille sat in his chair.

There were narrow but deep stab wounds in his left shoulder and right thigh. He shouldn't be allowed to leave the bed—— according to doctor orders.

He couldn't even ride a horse, and had to travel by carriage.

Germain tilted his head.

"What would the letter be about?"

"That small group linking up with them earlier... You mentioned that they look like mercenaries? In that case, it can be explained why that strategist can travel through the mountains with a woman in tow."

"Ah!"

"The content will probably say that their strategist Regis is still alive."

"But if Sir Regis is still alive... it will still be a war declaration then?"

"They want to defeat the Imperial First Army with just that much people? We have another 50,000 men in the capital."

"T-That... That is true..."

"Don't be afraid. No matter how great a strategist he is, he won't be able to turn things around with such a small force. If this turns into a civil war, the only ones who will benefit are the neighbouring nations. It won't come to war. That's impossible."

He dismissed that notion firmly, but Latreille himself wasn't entirely convinced.

As if he was saying this for his own sake too.

This was probably because he witnessed Regis' extraordinary strategy and command during the battle of Grebauvar.

Regis could come up with strategies beyond imagination—— Latreille couldn't dismiss this doubt.

Shortly after, the envelope arrived.

Germain took the letter and opened it. The content could be read easily in the day, but it would take quite a bit of effort to see it clearly at dusk.

"I-It's as you say! It says that Regis d'Auric is still alive!"

"As expected huh..."

Germain continued reading it.

"He then apologized for inconveniencing you, Prince Latreille. He then said that the Fourth Army are here to congratulate your coronation."

"Hmmp... Excuses."

"What should we do?"

"It might be excuses, but we can't investigate the Fourth Army. And since I'm about to take the throne, avoiding a civil war is just what I am hoping for."

"Indeed... 500 cavalries and 4000 infantry might be too grand an entourage for the Princess, but it can still be explained away since there are still remnants of the High Britannia Army within our borders."

If they used the reason that the Empire was still a battlefield, there would be no way to refute them.

Latreille said grudgingly:

"... It is the failure of the Field Marshal that High Britannia invaded so deep into our territory."

The letter didn't mention all this, but it would be brought to light if they tried to refute the content of the letter. Since the other party thought this far, it would not be possible to fault them.

Latreille clicked his tongue in his heart.

As expected of that strategy, this tactic was as brilliant as before. He already thought out the ways to counter any of Latreille's accusations.

Germain asked:

"How should we respond?"

"... Express our jubilance in learning that First Grade Admin Officer Regis d'Auric is still alive, and apologize for the mistake in our earlier report. Then compliment him for his contributions in the victorious battle of Grebauvar, and award him a medal. Invite Argentina to the coronation ceremony, and welcome the men of the Fourth Army —— we have no choice but to say that."

That would be conceding to all the demands from the other party.

Latreille clenched his fist.

Germain placed his hand on top of that fist.

"Please calm down, Prince Latreille... I think this is a good response. It will be hard on the Fourth Princess too, since she has to congratulate her political opponent on taking the throne, her heart must be as turbulent as a storm. At best, this is just her venting."

"I know. But the one who pushed me into this state is that strategist. He created this situation which I had to respond in this way."

"Please don't say that. Even when Sir Regis was acting in the dark inside the capital, the most he could pull off was unreliable fake news in newspapers. In the end, you are the one who will be emperor, Prince Latreille."

"Yes."

"In other words, since the Fourth Princess will be attending the ceremony, it will be clear to nobles who will be the emperor. Sir Regis is the one who should be troubled."

"You're right, Germain. I'm probably flustered because of my imminent coronation."

"You're just tired, my liege. Let's return to the palace after the letter is written. We will leave the rest to the 《White Hare Knights》."

"... Yes. For the sake of tomorrow, I will heed your words."

Latreille boarded the carriage and returned to the palace ahead of the others.

Under the command of Batteren from the 《White Hare Knights》, the First Army also retreated slowly back to the capital. At the same time, the Fourth Army also headed into the capital.

The sudden need to take in 4500 soldiers meant that the logistics personnel were laden with work.

Just like what Regis said, the soldiers of the Fourth Army got to sleep somewhere warm.

The two units that was standing against each other in the day marched in two separate lines along the streets of the capital, which was a rare sight to behold.

The citizens who was worried about the outbreak of civil war welcome them with smile of relief.

People crowded the sidewalks as they watch the impromptu parade.

The next day——

It was raining, but that wouldn't stop the coronation.

Bourgine was once persecuted for giving a speech in this plaza in front of the palace. And now, an extravagant stage had been erected right in this plaza.

Heavy infantry in silver armour serving as guards and formed ranks.

"You're late, newbie!"

A man with large ears and tanned skin yelled. He was the reporter Claude from Weekly Quarry. He had a flat leather cap, and wore a wrinkled suit.

A petite young girl ran over.

"How selfish! Please! Don't leave me behind! Ha, ha..."

She also wore something like leather cap and a suit, but her skin was fair and eyes were blue. Her blonde hair was tied behind in a ponytail Claude gave something to the girl.

"Wear this."

It was a piece of wood with a stamp that could worn on the neck with its strings.

Claude was wearing it too.

"Senpai, what is this?"

"Press permit. Without it, we can't even enter the place where we can see the nobles. By the way, if we queue normally, we probably can't even hear Latreille give his coronation speech."

"What a great crowd. As if everyone in the capital is here. Not just the plaza, even the streets are packed."

"Retard. It's just 100,000 or so people. The population of the Empire is many times of this."

"That's already incredible!?"

"Well... For this historical event of the century, it's incredible that I'm pushing my junior who slept in."

"T-that's because senpai doesn't let me sleep..."

The young girl blushed.

Claude gritted his teeth.

"Because your essays are too terrible, and we had to edit it late into the night! Alright, let's go!"

Pushed forcibly from behind, the girl walk forward as if she was stumbling.

"Wahh! Really now... By the way, I'm impressed that you got us press passes."

"Yeah."

"Weekly Quarry is now synonymous with the anti-establishment movement stirring up in the capital. And you managed to get press passes... Sigh, oh no senpai. The name is wrong."

"Is that so?"

"Look, my name's Betty right? The name on it is wrong... Sigh, even the press

name is wrong... Huh, senpai's name is wrong too—?!"

"Don't be so loud. There's no way the Ministry of Ceremony will issue press passes to Weekly Quarry."

"Is this a forgery...?"

"Are you retarded? How can this stamp be forged in a matter of hours?"

"Is this... stolen...?"

"Don't be retarded. They loan these to us because they were moved by our conviction for our cause. So we have to make good use of it."

"That's a crime—?!"

"If you don't like it, then go home. I will go alone."

Claude held his hand out.

Betty dodged away.

"... O-On second thought, Senpai is the one who stole it, this has nothing to do with me. I want to see the ceremony, Prince Latreille is really dreamy."

"Hah! We're going to write a report that criticize him though."

"I'm so excited."

"... What a weirdo... Well, normal people won't work at our place anyway."

They mixed in with the other reporters and made it through the checkpoint.

Although the staff will check the press pass, they only give it a simple glance because of the overwhelming crowd size. And so, even crude replica could slip through security.

However, they would still conduct stringent checks for weapons.

Before the main gate of the palace was a lectern, and the nobles were seated right in front of it.

While the reporter's zone were separated with a fence, in a position where they could see the lectern and the nobles from the side.

They could see everyone's faces.

An ideal spot.

Although the heavy infantry standing before them were an eyesore...

"Move away! Or just sit down!"

When they heard the reporter's angry roar, the guards squatted down in a panic, which was a little cute—— Betty thought.

The short Betty stood on her toes and looked towards the lectern.

"Hah... Prince Latreille isn't there yet?"

"It's raining after all, so he will wait in his room before the ceremony begins. Marquis Bergerac isn't here yet after all."

Claude would usually call those people by their name, but there were others watching, so he had to be more careful with his choice of words.

"Bergerac...?"

"Ughh... At least remember the name of the minister of ceremony."

"Ahh, yes, I remember! He is the maternal grandfather of the third prince.

Ahaha... I need to spend extra effort to remember things not related to hotties."

"Really now..."

"It took me quite a while to remember things about senpai too—"

"Shut up.."

Claude squeezed to the front of the group of reporters.

As she was shorter, Betty pushed to the front right behind him.

Claude leaned forth from the barricade and pointed:

"Look at the nobles seating section."

"How gorgeous and extravagant—"

"Do you remember their seating order?"

"Is there any meaning behind that?"

"The seats to the right have the highest status, and it goes down behind in that order. The order of their seating is the result of the ferocious power struggle between the aristocrats. We can see how influential they are from where they are seated."

```
"Ohh. I see—"
```

"If the emperor changes, the nobles he sides with will also change. And so, there will be a reshuffling of their order."

Betty nodded in agreement.

She wanted to make notes, but couldn't do so because of the other reporters pushing from behind.

They could only talk like this because Claude was grabbing the fence and acting like a shield. If she was alone, she would have been squashed.

"The one at the very front should be the royals right?"

"Aside from them, there are the current ministers. They have special privileges, but they won't side with the emperor, but with the nobles."

"Eh—, the ministers are there too?"

"The ministers are representatives of the nobles after all. Things will get complicated if the emperor dismisses a minister without strong reasons. Not only would it hinder the administration of the empire, it might even spark off a civil unrest."

```
"I see."
```

"They are super grand nobles that couldn't be taken lightly after all. Oh, look! That's Princess Argentina!"

"Wahh! I'm her fan!"

The appearance of the person only second in prominence to the emperor whipped the other reporters into a frenzy.

The mob pushed strongly from behind once again, and Claude's arms started trembling.

Even the fence was creaking.

```
"Ughh..."
```

"Sempai, are you okay?"

"Yeah... Watch carefully. That vermillion haired girl became a Lieutenant General in the Imperial army at the age of 15, and is the heroine with the greatest war merits in the previous war...Princess Marie Quatre Argentina de Belgaria."

"Amazing!"

"... Your vocabulary is too limited for a reporter. Never mind, the person beside her is even more amazing!"

"Ohh."

"That's First Grade Admin Officer Regis d'Auric, who is known as the Wizard. He is wearing men's clothes today... Kukuku."

A woman's dress suits you better, Claude laughed.

Besides the Princess was a man in a formal attire. But his step was unsteadily, back hunched and didn't seem to be reliable.

Betty tilted her head.

"That... That skinny man is Regis? Isn't he the Princess' porter?"

"Even though he is just a chevalier, that's still a noble. You will address him as 'Lord'."

"Wah— My impression of him in my heart is crumbling—"

"Well, I felt the same way when I first met him... And besides him... Is the Emperor's sword, Duke Eddie Fabio de Balzac."

"A hottie, amazing!"

"He disappeared after the founding day festival... So he's working for the Fourth Princess now huh."

"What kind of person is he?"

"He is the top swordsman in the Empire, and never lost in a martial competition before. However, rumours says that he hates the battlefield."

"Ehh—"

"He was working as the First Prince's escort... But the First Prince forfeit his claim to the throne and come out in support of the Fourth Princess, so Eddie should be in the Princess' faction. Just as I thought."

"Prince Auguste seems to be absent."

"There's no one with silver hair around."

"There's someone with brown hair though."

The other reporters noticed too, and the crowd turned rowdy. Even the nobles were noticeably shocked.

Claude sighed.

"Are you serious... That's the third prince Heinrich Trois Bastian de Belgaria! He actually declared that he is in the Princess' faction! And to do so on the coronation day, this is interesting!"

"Hmm? What's so interesting?"

"Think about it. The Second Prince Latreille is going to be emperor. Leaving smart people aside, even retards know that they should try to get into the new emperor's good books."

"I'm not a retard."

"I'm not talking about you. The Third Prince Bastian chose this day when the match has already been decided to stand at the Fourth Princess' side!"

"Maybe they just happened to come in from the same entrance."

"This isn't a bar somewhere?! If they aren't in the same faction, then they should enter separately."

"Is that so—"

"You don't understand huh? After his interview with us, he chose to stand in that position. Isn't that wonderful?"

"Ehh, is that true?!"

"Speaking of which, I haven't tell you the details. I will tell you about it when we return to the office."

"Hah..."

Betty nodded ditzly.

And they even managed to get a scope of something illegal and couldn't be reported.

Claude's mouth twisted and he showed a sinister smile.

"Kukuku... The new emperor Latreille will be setting sail in a storm huh? Since Prince Bastian supports Princess Argentina, that means the rumours of regicide... isn't completely baseless."

The aristocrats weren't getting unsettled over nothing.

Claude cast his gaze to Regis who was seated beside the Princess.

"... Is this part of your scheme too?"

Betty pointed and asked:

"Senpai, who are the nobles seated on the second row?"

"They are the nobles from around the capital —— Grand nobles from central. Latreille's faction. Not only are they rich and powerful, the Prince they supported even became the Emperor. They are the happiest group here."

"It feels uncomfortable that the strong became even mightier."

"Next is the new nobles from the south. You know about the alliance of the new nobles (The council of Gaillard's garden) right?"

"O-Of course I know that."

Betty's eyes were wavering.

Claude sighed.

"I already told you to read the documents. They made used of the vast and fertile lands in the south and their trade with the southern nations to accumulate massive wealth."

"They are loaded?"

"Yes, they will be a good opponent against the greedy and power hungry nobles in central. They might be in the Princess' faction... but they're ranked

higher than the western nobles."

"You mean the third faction?"

Claude nodded.

"They were considered the second faction during the times of the previous emperor... The influence of the old nobles of the west had waned. They might have the reputation and history, but the nobles there are poor. They suffered the heaviest losses in the war with High Britannia probably because their position was already weak."

"Ah, that is true for the west."

Nobles from other regions would be ranked behind these three main factions.

Those with the peerage of Vicomte and below, as well as Houses without much assets were not much different from commoners, and wouldn't even have a seat.

Betty noticed something.

"Hmm? The eastern nobles aren't here?"

"Because there are rumours saying that Latreille assassinated the 6th queen consort Johaprecia. There seems to be a war in the east."

"Fufu... Aren't we the ones who spread that rumour?"

"Hey, don't let the people around us hear that?"

Claude said with a faint smile.

Looking again, there were empty seats amongst the grand nobles although many nobles craved for these front row seats.

"Is it because of the rain?"

"No... Because there are noble who are willing to risk Lèse-majesté, with the reason that "Latreille's suspicion of regicide hasn't been cleared yet". They are people who are willing to fight a duel in order to defend their honour."

"Speaking of which, the Empress is absent?"

"Hmm? Ahh... Betty, it's about to begin. You have to remember the entire

flow, and write them down later."

"Leave it to me!"

What worries the ceremonial officials the most was the Empress.

She was Latreille's mother.

After the Weekly Quarry publicized Royal Chamberlain Marquis Beclard's testimony, the Empress disappeared.

And she has not been found til this day. Many people drew conjectures about the empty seat at the very front row.

The bugle announcing the beginning of the ceremony was blown. Drums were beaten in rhythm.

The solemn orchestra pulled open the curtains for the ceremony.

The waiting room inside a palace——

Latreille was in traditional formal wear, and waited silently for the coronation to begin.

Germain entered the room.

"... We still can't find the Empress."

"Is that so. She won't be attending the ceremony then."

"The commotion yesterday led to the lax in surveillance. My apologies."

"What are you apologizing for? Am I a child who can't attend a ceremony without his mother?"

"No, not at all!"

Latreille whispered into Germain's ears.

"... That is a woman who will go as far as poisoning my elder brother in order to let her child succeed the throne. Keep your guard up. She is the most dangerous when she is in hiding."

"Hmmm?! Yes my liege. I will bolster the search party."

"By an adequate amount. The top priority is the safety of the ceremonies attendees. It would be slight against my name if any of my guest are harmed during my coronation."

"Yes, I will keep that in mind!"

Germain left the waiting room after a bow.

Latreille was alone once more.

He opened the chest that contained his personal effects.

There was a palm-sized painting in there.

Painted on it was a black haired woman wearing an apron.

"Beatrice... I have... finally come this far..."

The door was knocked, and Latreille placed the painting back into the wooden chest.

The moment he left the palace, he heard the band playing. And the cheers of the people. The plaza and the streets were filled to the brim despite the rain.

He headed for the ceremonial stage.

And climbed the steps.

There were merely eight steps.

—— How many people's blood stained his hand in order for him to climb these steps?

On the fourth step, he saw someone at the lectern.

"... Father."

It was the wrinkled figure of the previous emperor. With a sword thrust through his chest.

And of course, that was an illusion.

He was already buried six feet under.

It was the same for the 6th queen consort standing beside him.

"...Be gone, witch."

He didn't feel a shred of guilt towards the devil who was sucking the very life out of the empire —— Latreille believe this unwaveringly.

He climb the steps again.

Stepping over the enemy generals he defeated.

And crushed the soldiers who died under Latreille's command under his soles too.

On the seventh step, his leg trembled.

"... Auguste... Big brother."

He saw his elder brother who was poisoned by his mother.

Auguste was smiling calmly, but black blood was dripping from his purple lips.

At this moment, the cheers from the crowd sounded like the vengeful wails from hell. Latreille's brows were covered in sweat, which slid down his cheeks.

His feet wouldn't move, as if he had stepped into a quagmire.

Latreille's breathing turned ragged.

A voice shouted from behind him.

"Prince Latreille, lead the empire into everlasting prosperity!"

That man was Germain.

The illusions of the corpses all vanished.

Before his eyes was the stage, the nobles in attendance as well as the thunderous cheers of the people.

Latreille raised a hand in response.

"Of course!"

He stood at the lectern.

The cheer grew louder.

His gaze fell on the nobles who were present.

Almost all of them were dressed extravagantly and had faces filled with greed. Amongst them, only Argentina and the people around her had sharp

gazes.

—— Even if you make such an expression, it is already too late.

In the end, the Empress was absent.

Not because she was shunned, but because she sense danger.

The minister of ceremony, Bergerac came out, and announced the beginning of the coronation. Applause filled the air.

Bergerac was Bastian's maternal grandfather. His face was pale as if he was about to faint, probably because he was too conscious about his grandson siding with Argentina.

The pope recited words of blessing to Latreille and crowned him.

The ceremony proceeded smoothly.

He could finally feel it physically.

Latreille raised his head and looked at the lead coloured sky as rain drops fell.

—— Even if heaven doesn't will it, I'm still the best candidate to be emperor. I will prove that to everyone by becoming a snake that devours all other nations!

He declared:

"Only the Belgaria empire has the right to call itself the only superpower in these lands! When there are no more enemies to fight, I promise that I will bring you all everlasting peace and prosperity. Follow my lead! I will bring you victory!"

He raised his fist.

Cheers erupted in the crowd.

"Vive le nouvel Empereur! Vive le nouvel Empereur!"

The band started playing and the citizens sang the national anthem.

Imperial Year 851, August 13th——

The new emperor of the Belgaria Empire, Allen Deux Latreille de Belgaria was coronated.

Chapter 2: Banquet

After the coronation ceremony ended, the celebratory banquet began.

A grand feast and extravagant decor filled the main hall of the Imperial palace Le Branne.

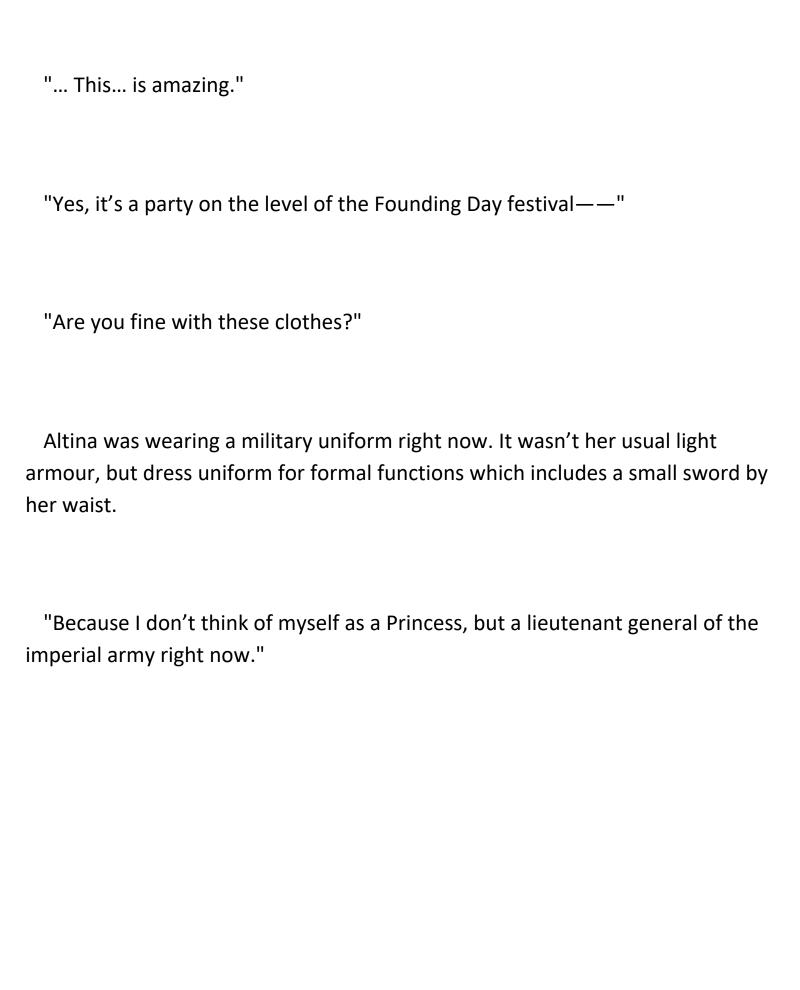
Red cloth were draped on the walls, lined with golden and silver threads. Marble statues held vases that came from the east, with massive flowers that had never been seen before.

Paintings and sculpture could be seen everywhere, which awed all those in attendance. Many of these art pieces were more than a century old, which coincide with the time when Belgaria's art and culture was thriving.

The orchestra played a gorgeous tune.

The nobles were dressed adequately for this banquet, making this feel like an exhibition of dresses and gems.

Regis was led here by Altina.





Since Latreille had inherited the throne, Altina lost her succession rights.
Unless there are any exceptional situation, this would be the traditional custom of Belgaria.

She was depressed earlier, but she has gotten over it. Her path to the throne has been sealed, but she had not given up on her dreams.

Compared to being a princess without any succession rights, she probably feel that her position as a lieutenant general was more valuable.

Regis thought——

Even if Altina is a commoner, she will still do her very best to achieve her dream.

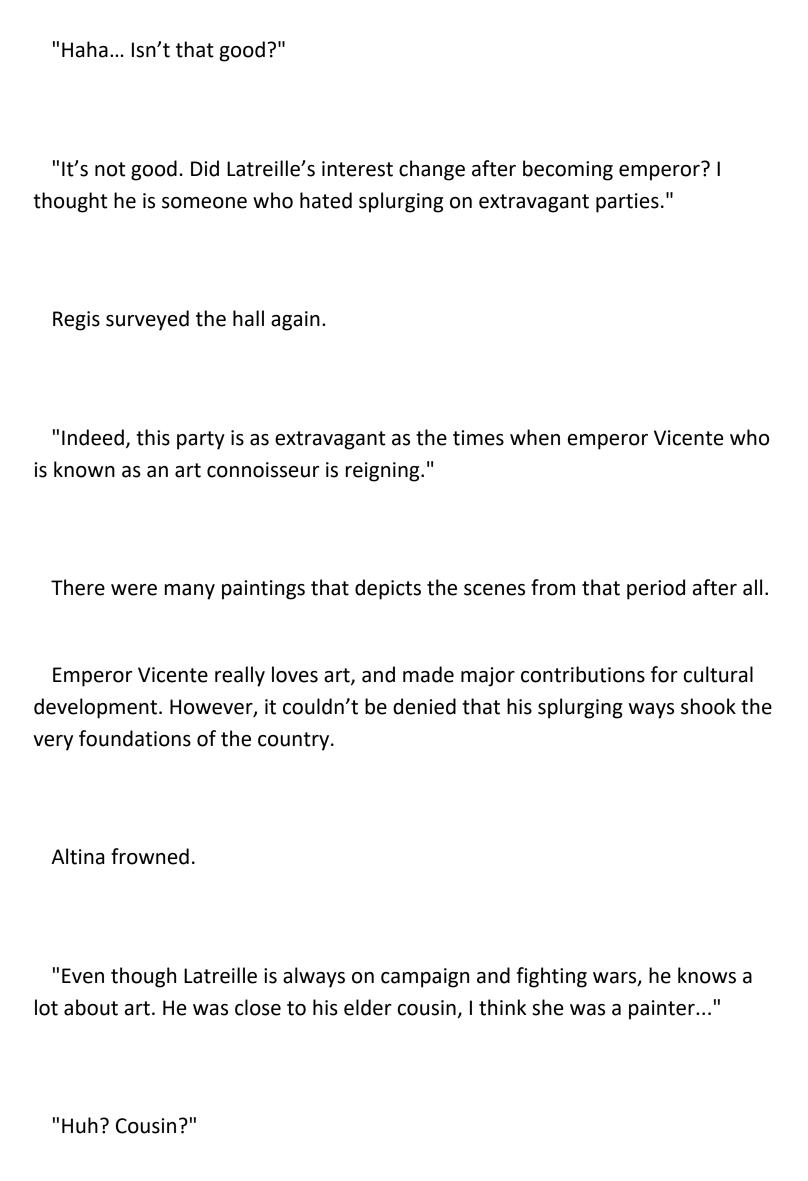
However, there isn't any doubt that the situation has grown even more difficult. And it has come to this because Regis himself was too timid and taking things too easily, at least that was how he thought.

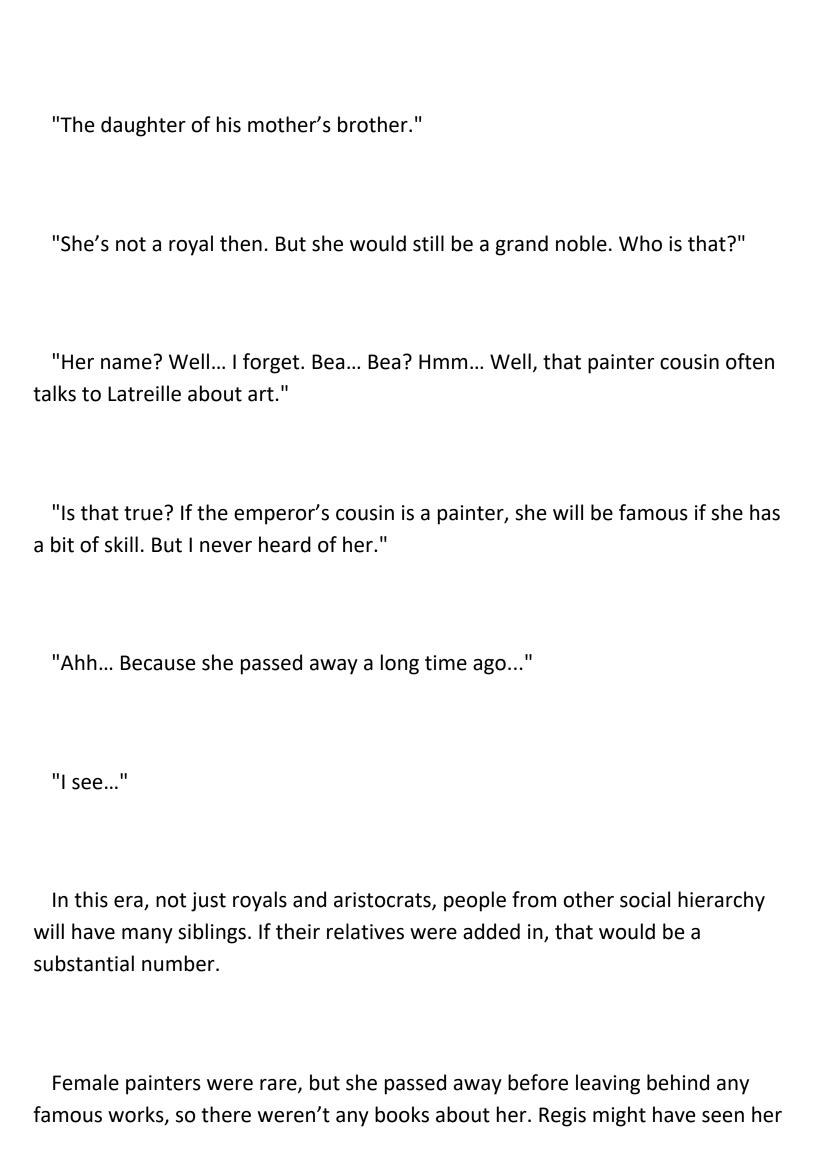
—— I won't hesitate any more.

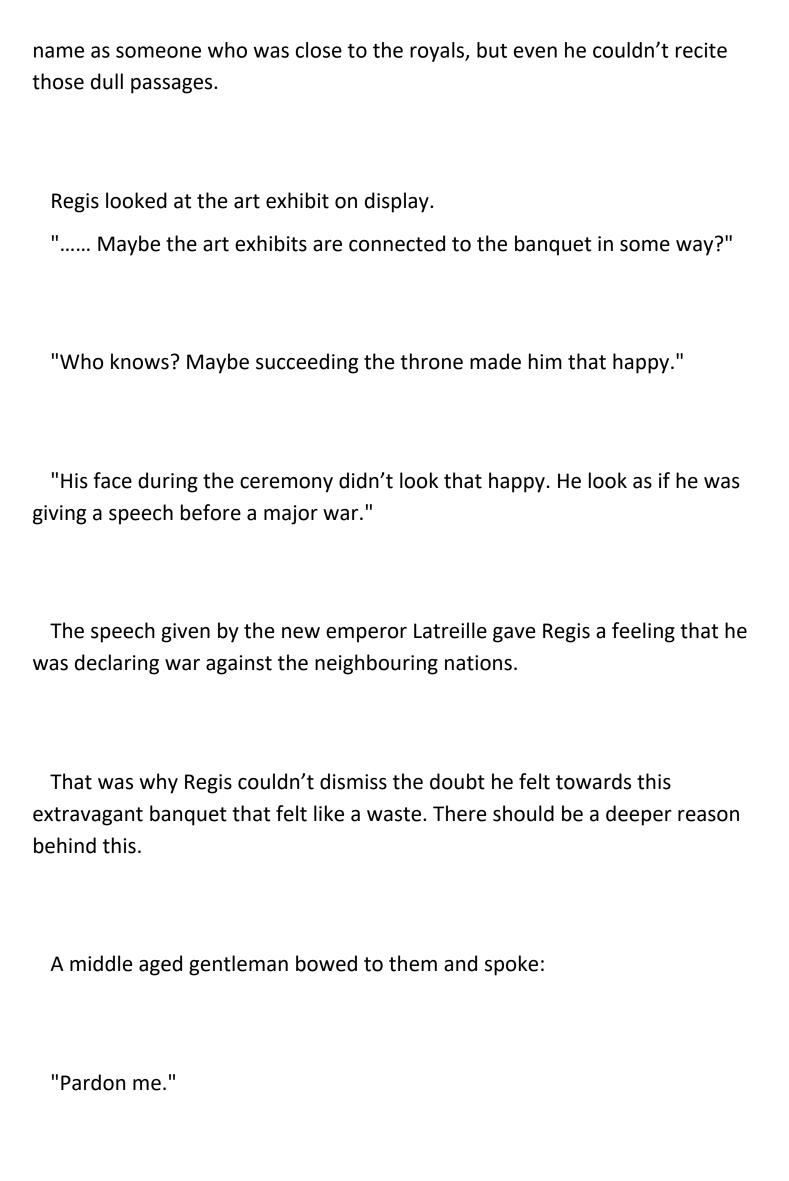
If he don't act decisively, he would lose the chance that Altina has. Regis was painfully aware of this fact.

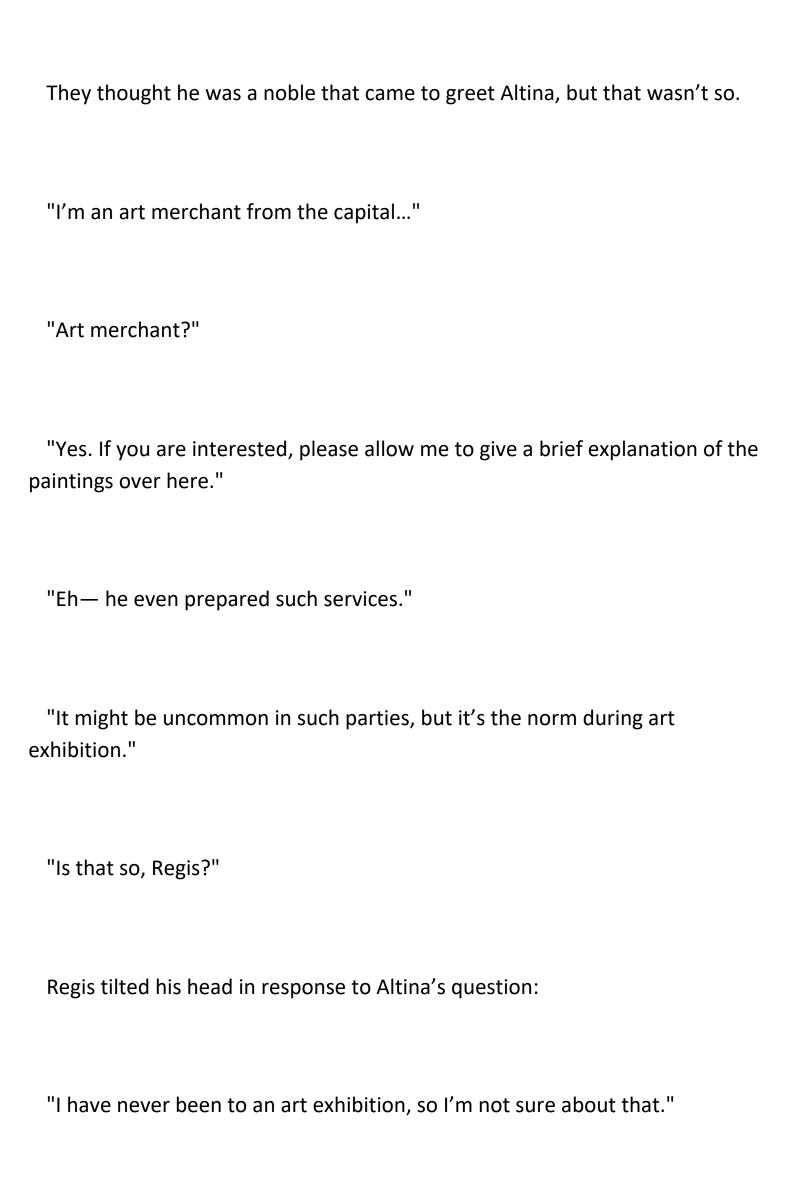












"Is that so. You're a young soldier, so maybe you are not interested in such things. This painting is safe kept in the treasury within the palace because it is commissioned by Emperor Vicente to the painting saint Philip, and took three years to complete..."

He was probably explaining this to Altina, so Regis didn't interrupt him.

He never went to an art exhibition in the past not because of a lack in interest, but because his status as a commoner and meagre wage meant he couldn't afford the entrance fee nor was he qualified to attend one.

There were many stories that used art pieces as the subject, and it gave him the urge to see these work for himself sometimes...

After hearing the art merchant's explanation, Altina sighed:

"Eh— So it's such an amazing work. I thought it was no different from the paintings hanging in the palace."

There actually isn't much difference

—— Regis threw these words in his heart into the trashcan.

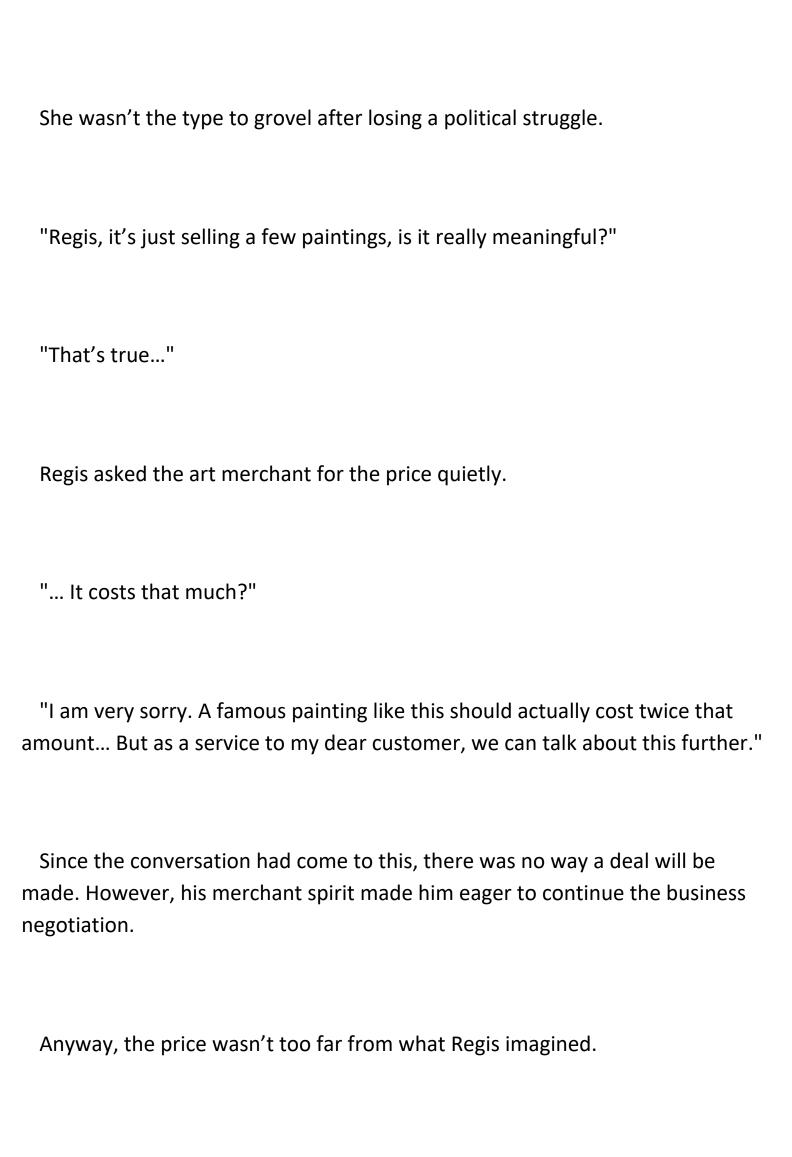
After all, the palace Le Brane had often been praised as an art gallery, and Altina had already gotten used to the top notch art pieces of the world.
The art merchant lowered his voice:
" This is a secret There's rumours that the new emperor Latreille will put up all the art pieces displayed during the banquet for sale."
"Ah, is that so?"
Altina answered disinterestedly.
Regis realized the implication:
"I see, so that's what this is. This banquet is held for the sake of raising funds for the military."
That explains the extravagant decor. A stingy party wouldn't be able to spur the interest of the nobles.

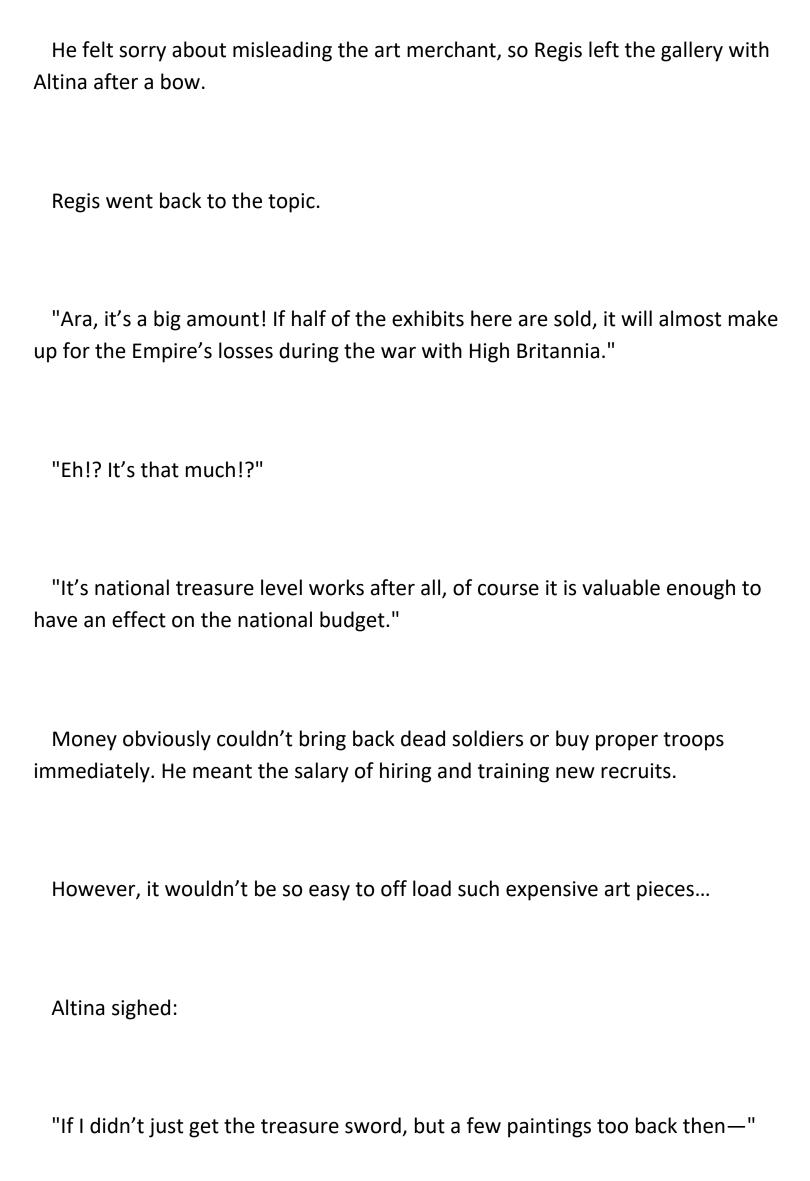
The art merchant nodded with a smile. "Each and every piece is a national treasure, and whoever obtains one would become the talk of the social world. It would be hard to imagine its value dropping in the future, and buying it would put you in the new emperor's good books." "Hmmp... I won't feel happy even if I get into Latreille's good books!" "I-Is that so... H-Haha..." When he heard Altina saying something that would be guilty of lèse-majesté if one wasn't a royal, the face of the art merchant turned pale. And of course, the art merchant already know who the banquet attendees were. And he only came to chat because he knew that she was a Princess.

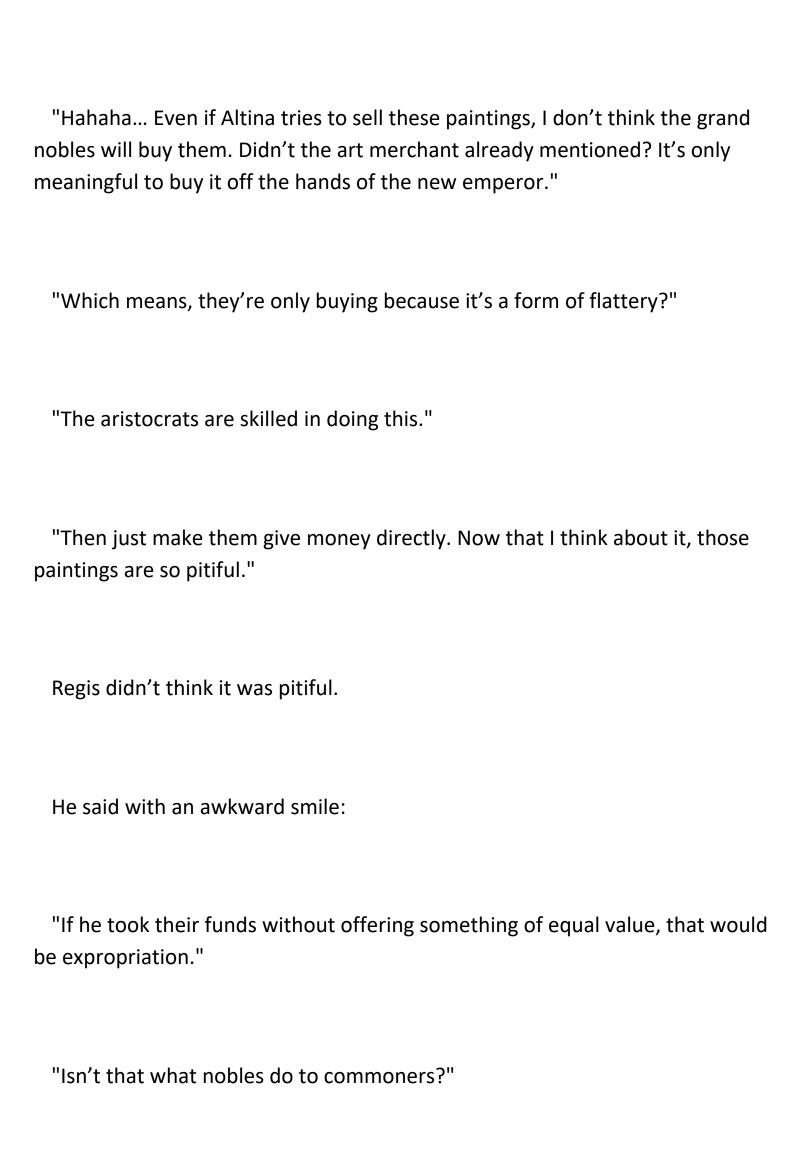
However, he didn't seem to understand Altina's personality yet.

needed to speak to the right people.

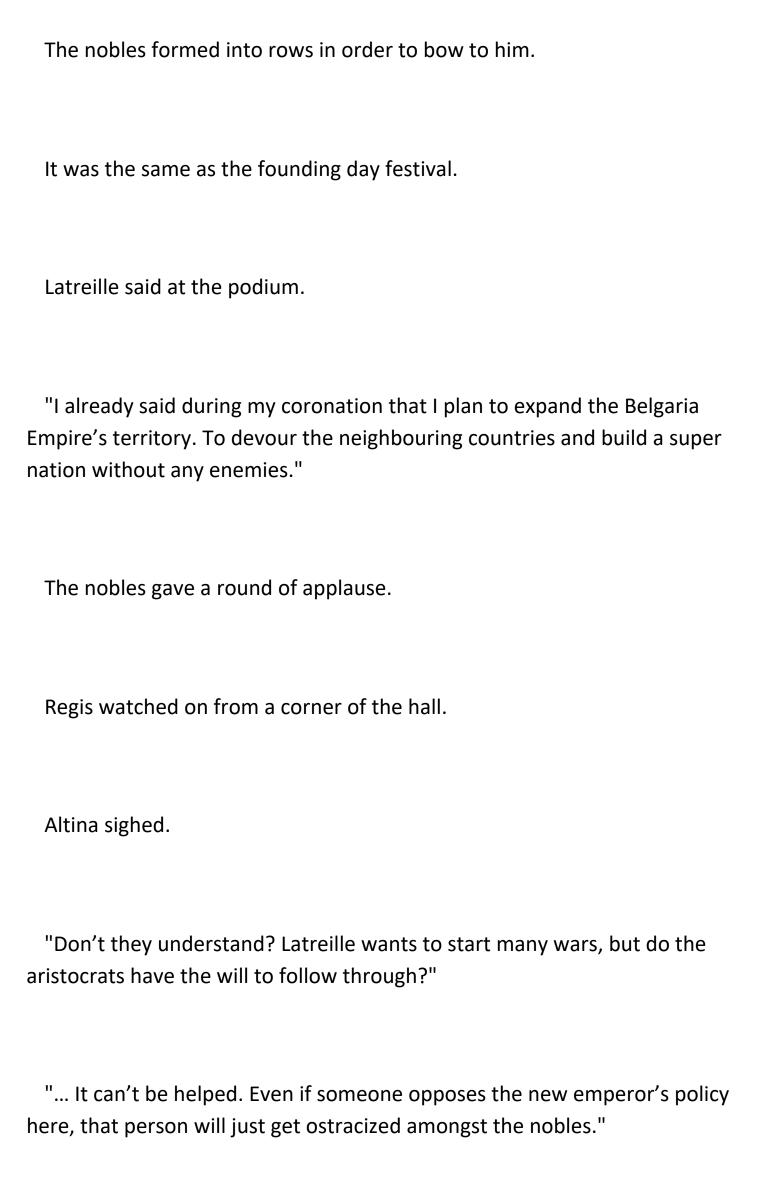
Normal nobles wouldn't buy paintings on the level of national treasures, so he

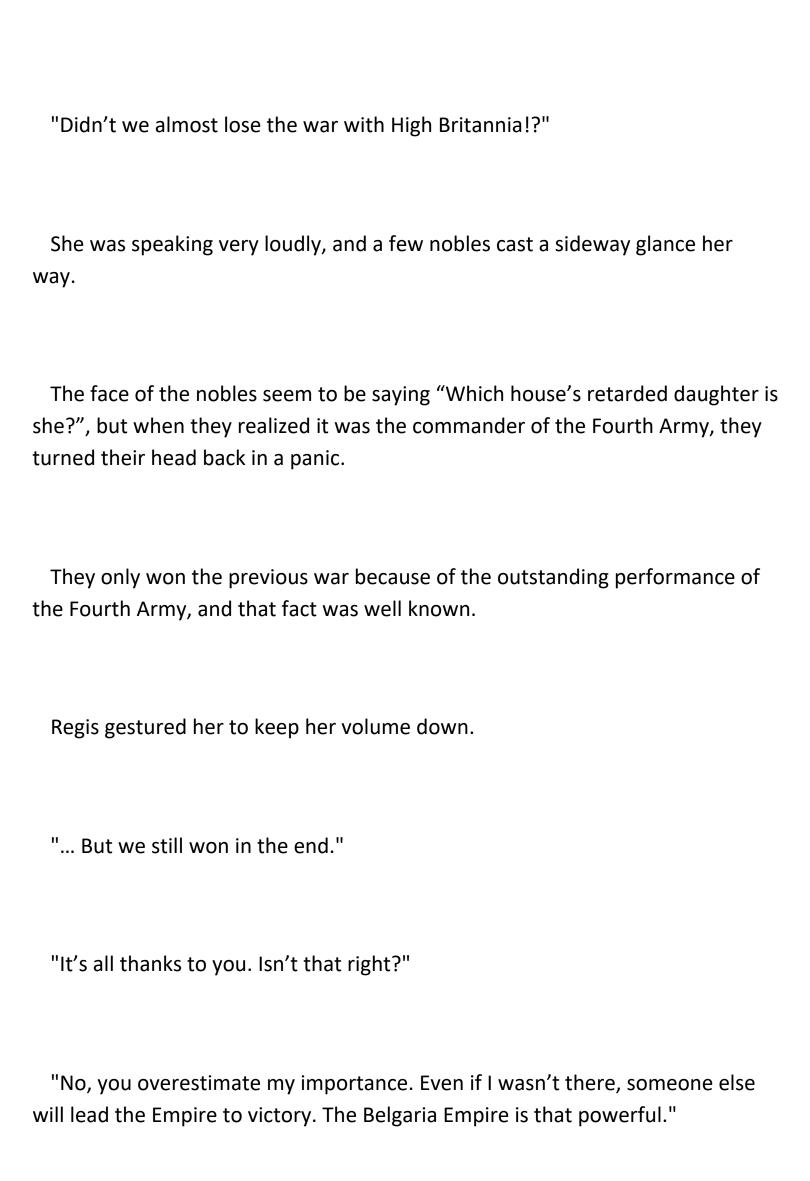


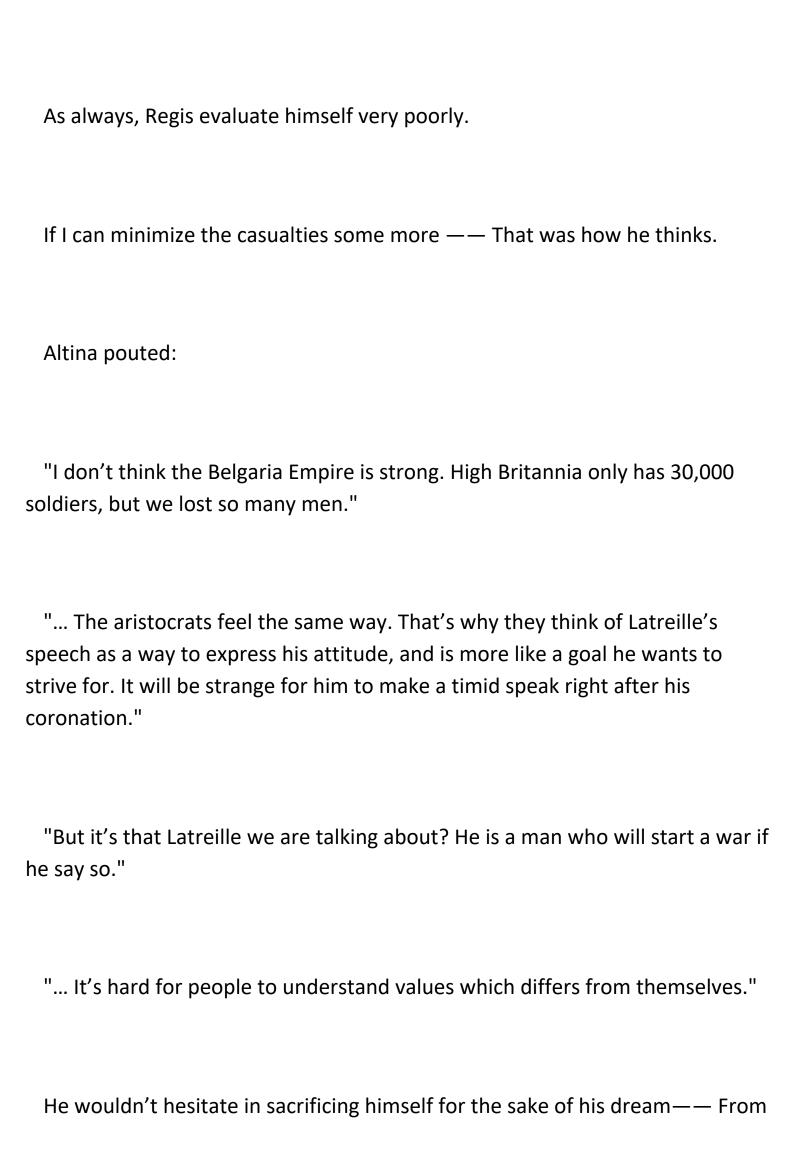


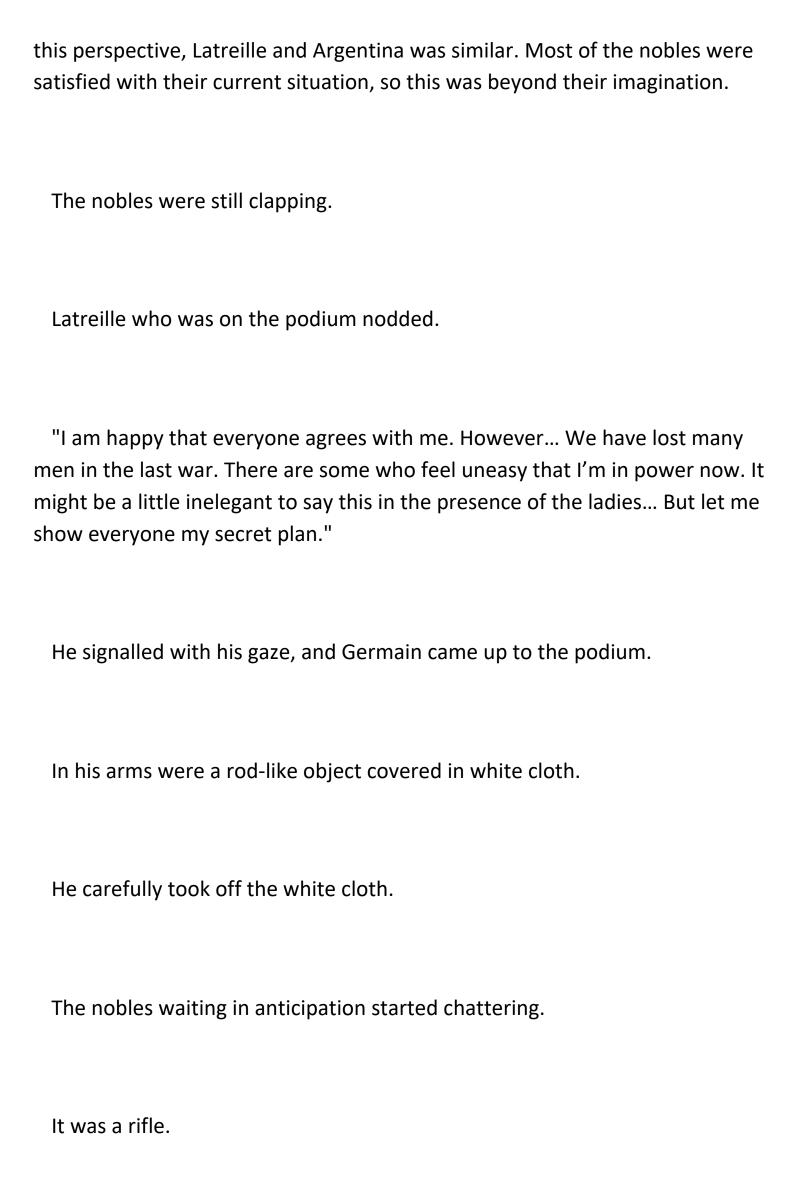


"That might be so But if the emperor imposed a policy of collecting high levies, the nobles would lose face. It wouldn't go as far as to incite civil war, but the imperial defence forces is composed of the noble's private army right now. For the new emperor Latreille who wish to enact hegemonism, he definitely doesn't want to lose the support of the nobles."
The Belgaria Emperor was the man with absolute authority.
But the nobles were the one who owns most of the troops and lord over most of the citizens.
Although the nobles wants to be in the Emperor's good grace, the Emperor couldn't overlook the feelings of the nobles either.
And this unhealthy state of affairs had been ongoing for centuries.
The band played the same music as the ceremony, and the new emperor Latreille appeared.

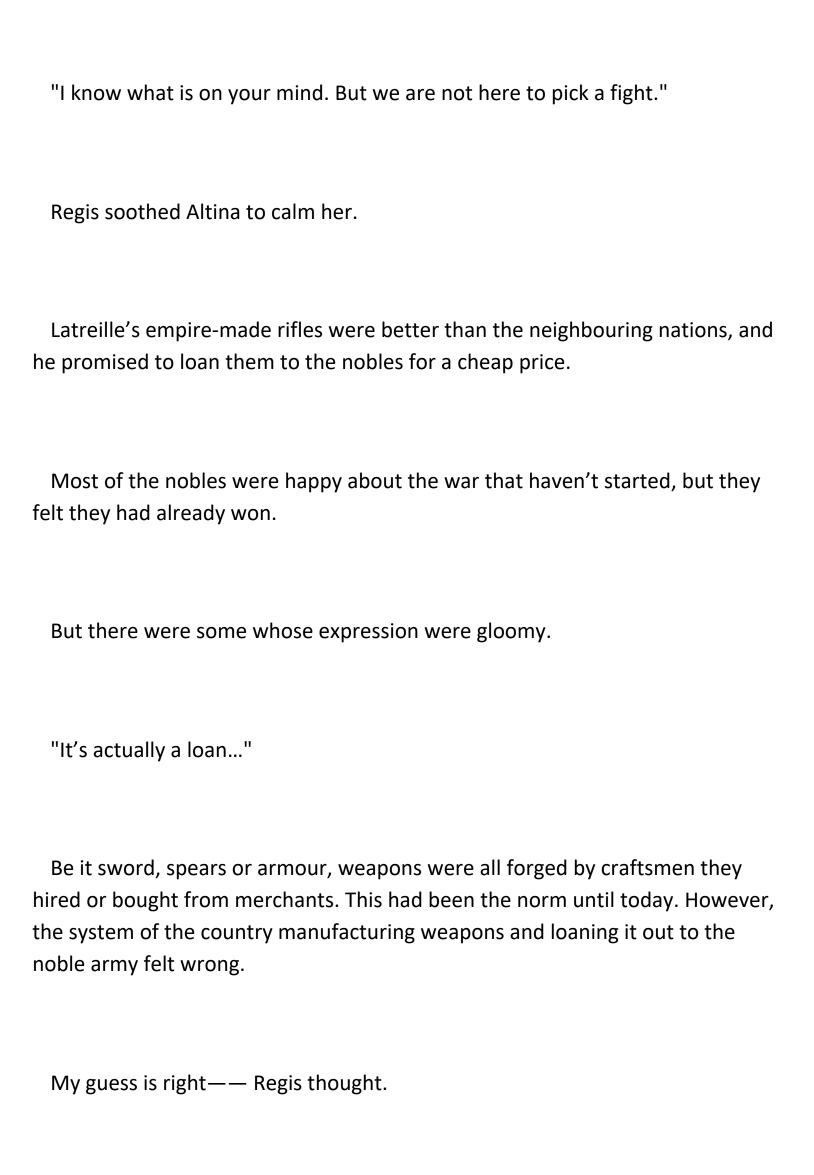








It was the rifle made in the Belgarian Empire which Regis saw some days ago. Even though that was just a prototype.
"The High Britannia had the upper hand in their war against us because the previous emperor doesn't concern himself with military affairs, leading to a large gulf in weapons. However, the empire has as many skilled crafters as there are stars, and the mass production of the new rifles are within our grasp!"
Woooahhhh, the noble men cheered once more.
Ladies couldn't discuss politics or military matters after all.
Altina also said loudly:
"He has a rifle!"
"I know, but the emperor is in the middle of his speech"
"But!!"



Latreille's endgame was to abolish the noble army and nationalize the armed forces.

But if he abolish them out of the blue, the nobles would not obey the order. A private army was mandatory for them to maintain their special privilege.

Nationalizing the manufacture of rifles and ammunition was the starting point to nationalizing the army.

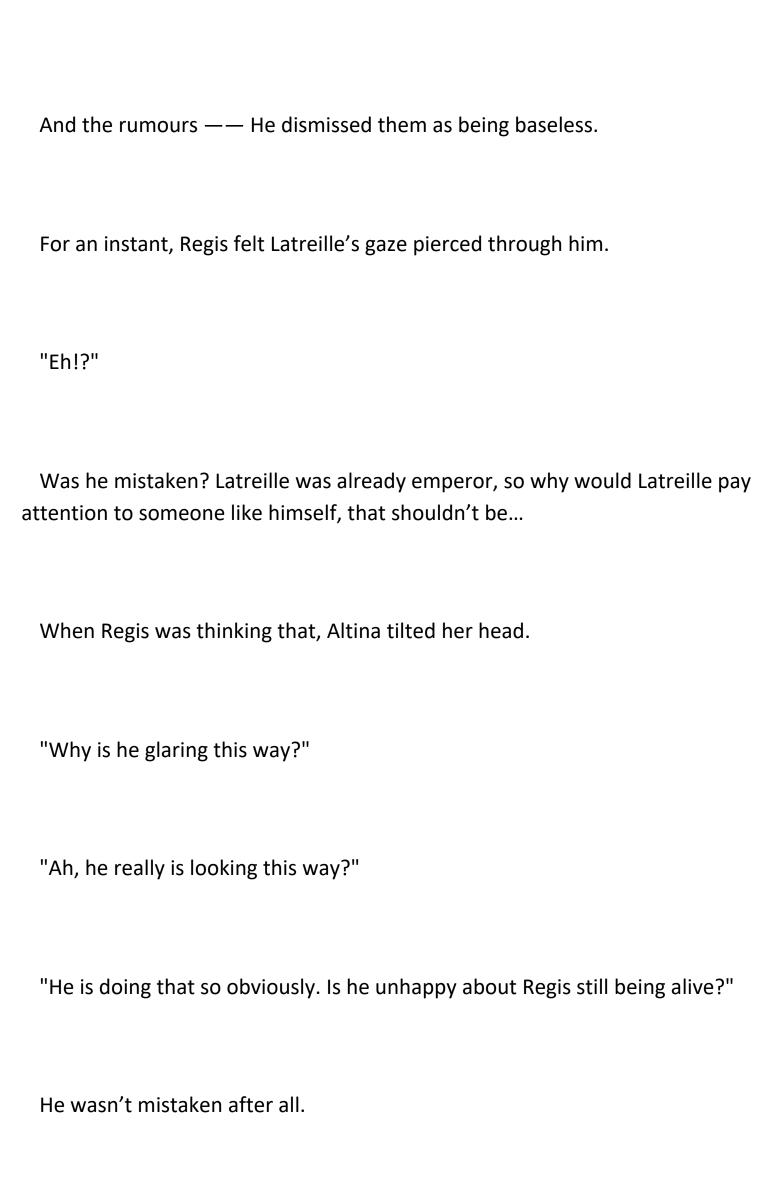
He knew that, but he couldn't tell that to the nobles. Regis himself also think that abolishing the noble army was a necessary path for peaceful diplomacy with other countries.

At this point, everyone thought Latreille's speech had ended——

"Recently... because of the advent of technology, some fools are able to publish their views to society, and spread baseless rumours."

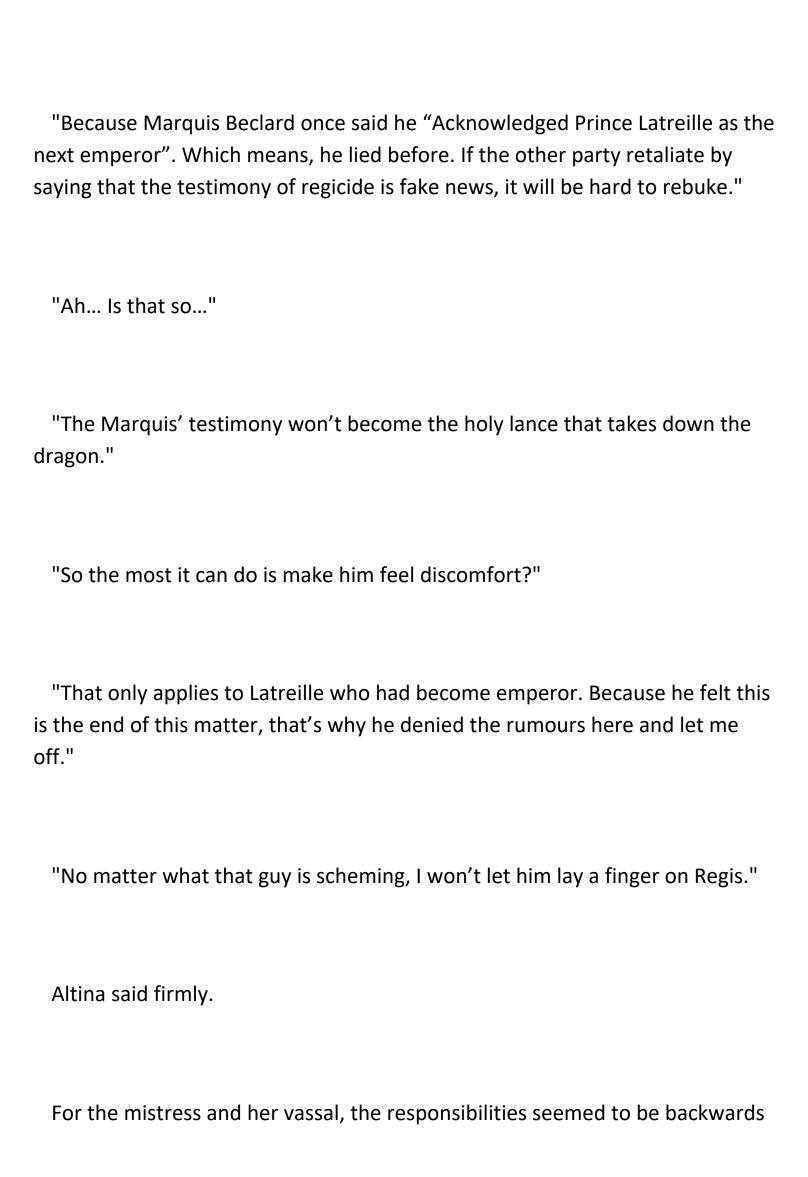
If he felt that the source wasn't reliable, he could just ignore them. But Regis didn't expect him to say that.

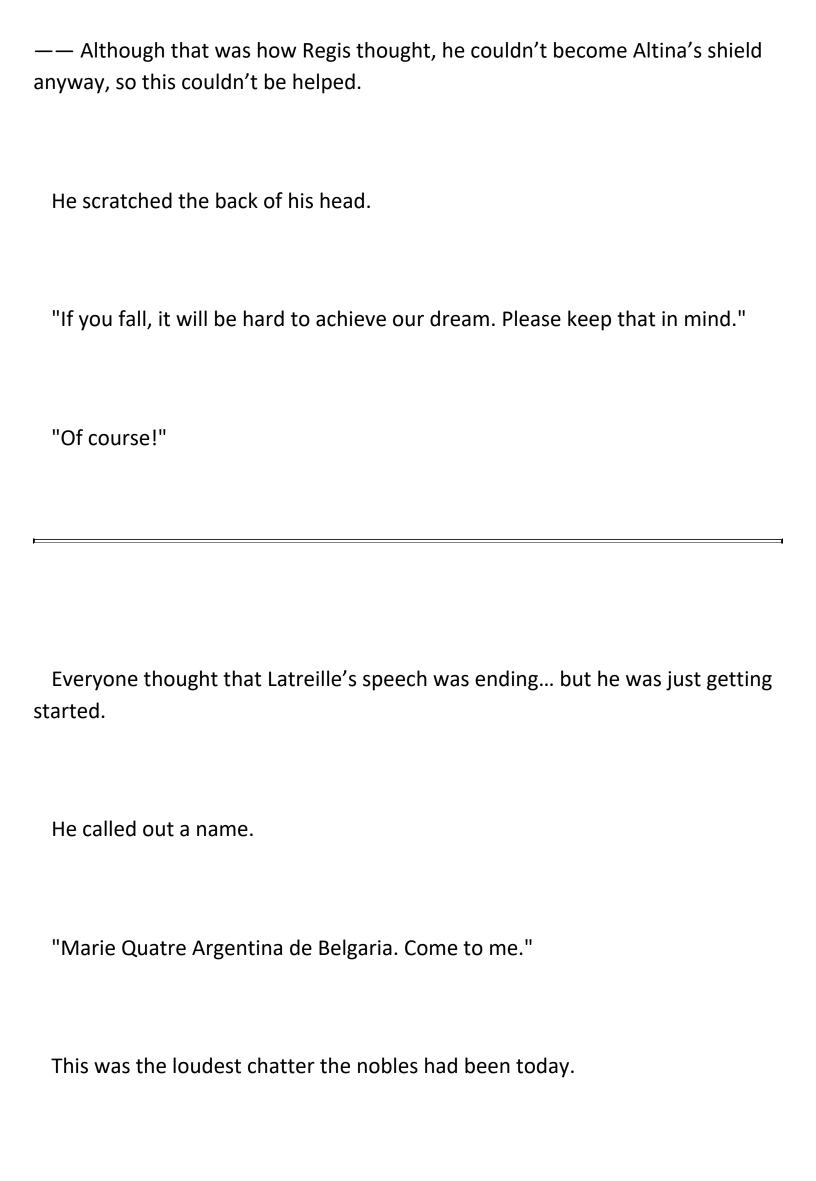
Because Latreille didn't give a specific name, he realized that the subject of his scorn was the Weekly Quarry.

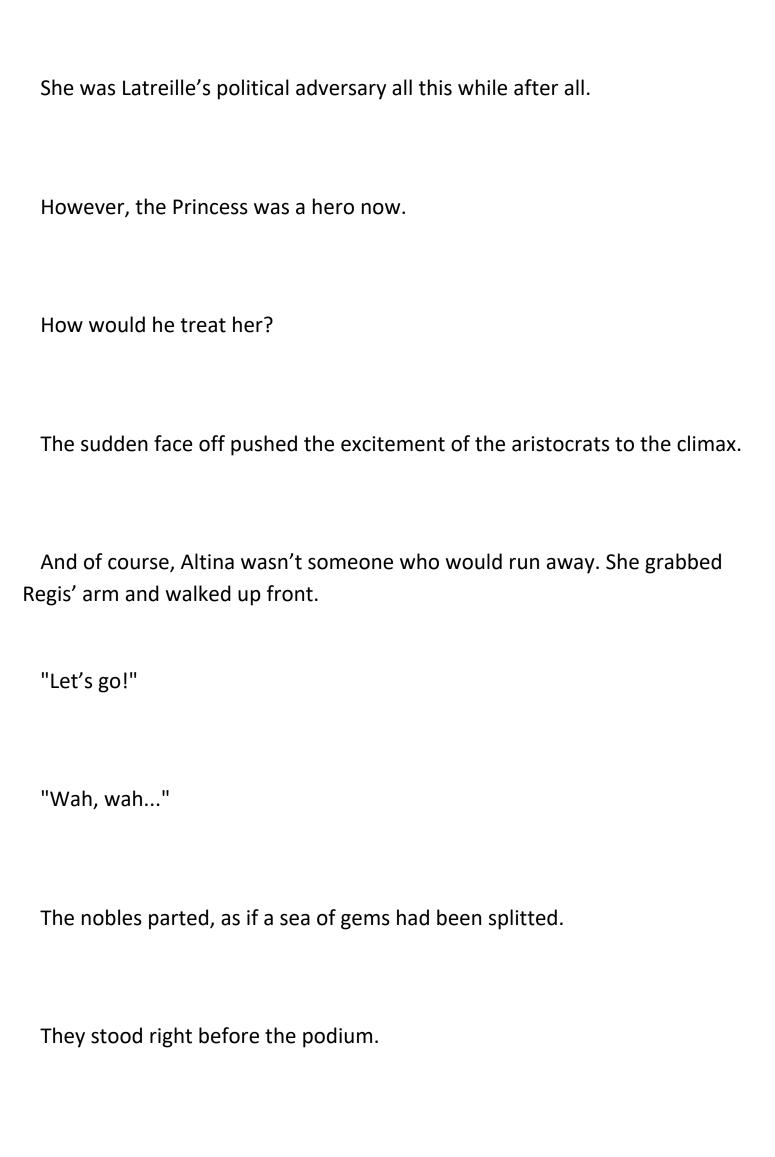


Regis covered his mouth with his hand, and whispered to Altina besides him.
" Do you know that the Weekly Quarry published news about the testimony of Chief Chamberlain Beclard one day before his coronation?"
"I don't know what magazine that is, but that sounds pretty interesting."
"I did that."
" Huh?"
"I forged Lord Germain's signature, brought Maquis Beclard out from his mansion, and printed his testimony onto the newspaper."
"What!?"
"It wasn't enough to stop him from taking the throne, but this will set the pieces for our counter attack."

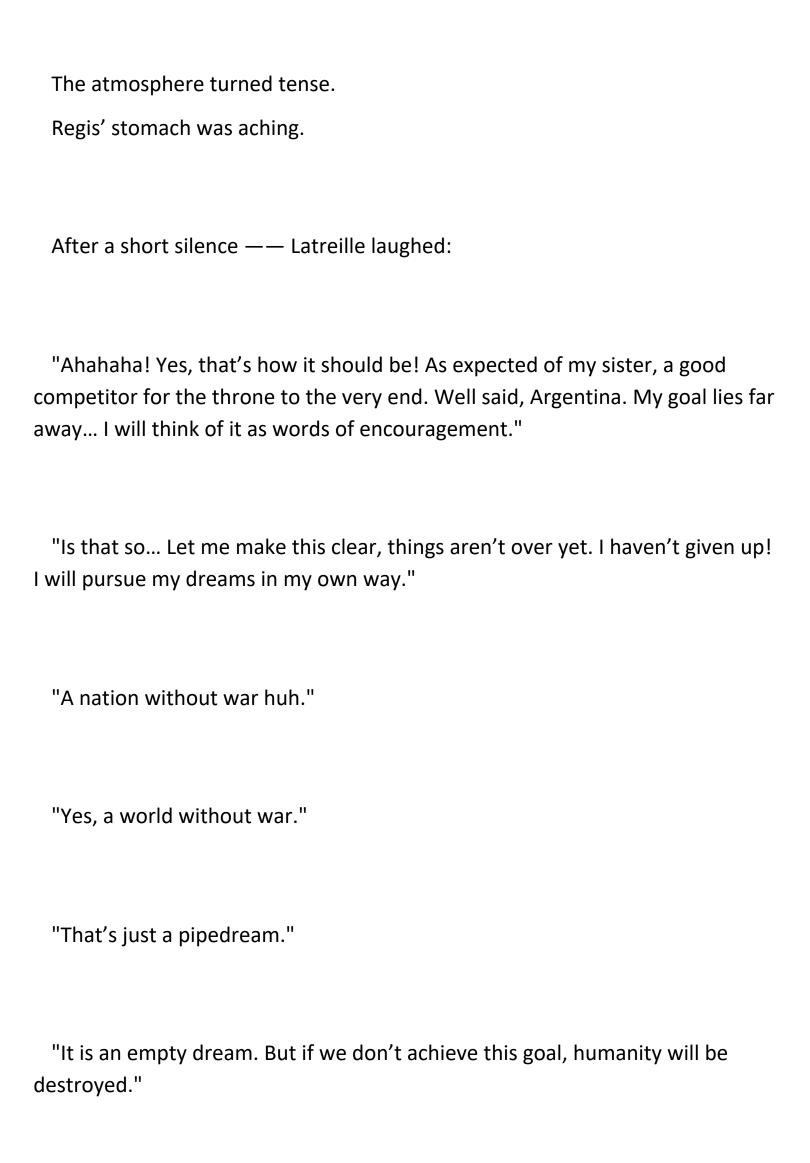
Altina stared right at Regis.
"Y-You already planned this far, but you didn't realized that you are being glared at, that's amazing in another sense!?"
"Ughh No Well Someone like me isn't much different from a pebble by the roadside right? Or maybe even less than that."
"What does Regis think about that suspicious case?"
"After interviewing Marquis Beclard directly, I am no longer suspicious, but certain."
"That means!"
" But there's no evidence. And right now, the empire craves for a young and competent emperor to bring them peace and stability. Such shaky evidence won't be enough to stop him from taking the throne. Doing something like bringing Marquis Beclard before the emperor and the nobles to testify will not work."
"It won't?"











Aristocrats wouldn't agree with pacifism, and most of the people present simply smiled wryly. They probably think that this was just a young girl's aspiration.

However, quite a number of intellectuals amongst the nobles showed a serious expression.

The idea that humanity will regress if war continues didn't originate from Regis, but something that had been debated thoroughly in many books. Unfortunately, those with such thinking belonged to a minority...

Latreille did not refute Altina's statement, and returned to the main topic.

"I won't ask you about your ideals. Will you do your best for the sake of the Empire? Even though you have been tasked with the defence of the north and east, you seem to have the forces to spare. Should I hand the other frontlines that are weaker over to you?"

"I don't have forces to spare...!!"

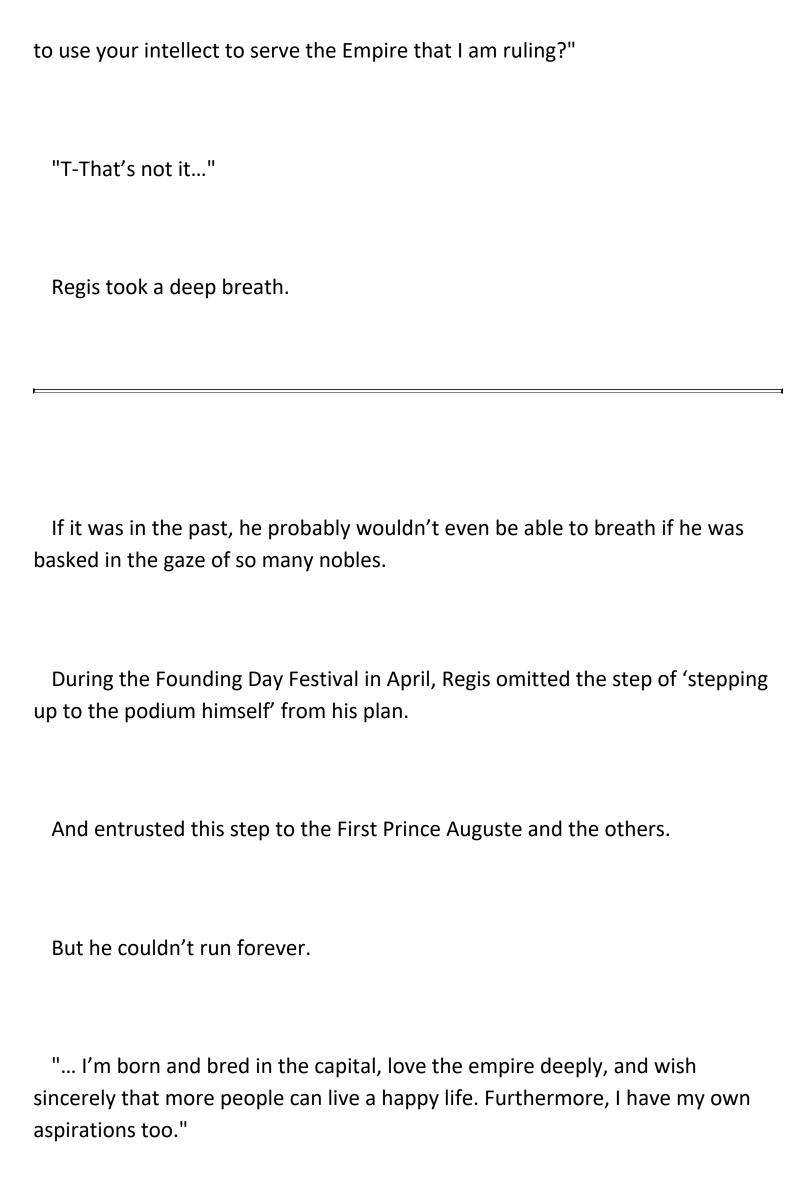
Regis tugged Altina's arm to stop her rebuke.

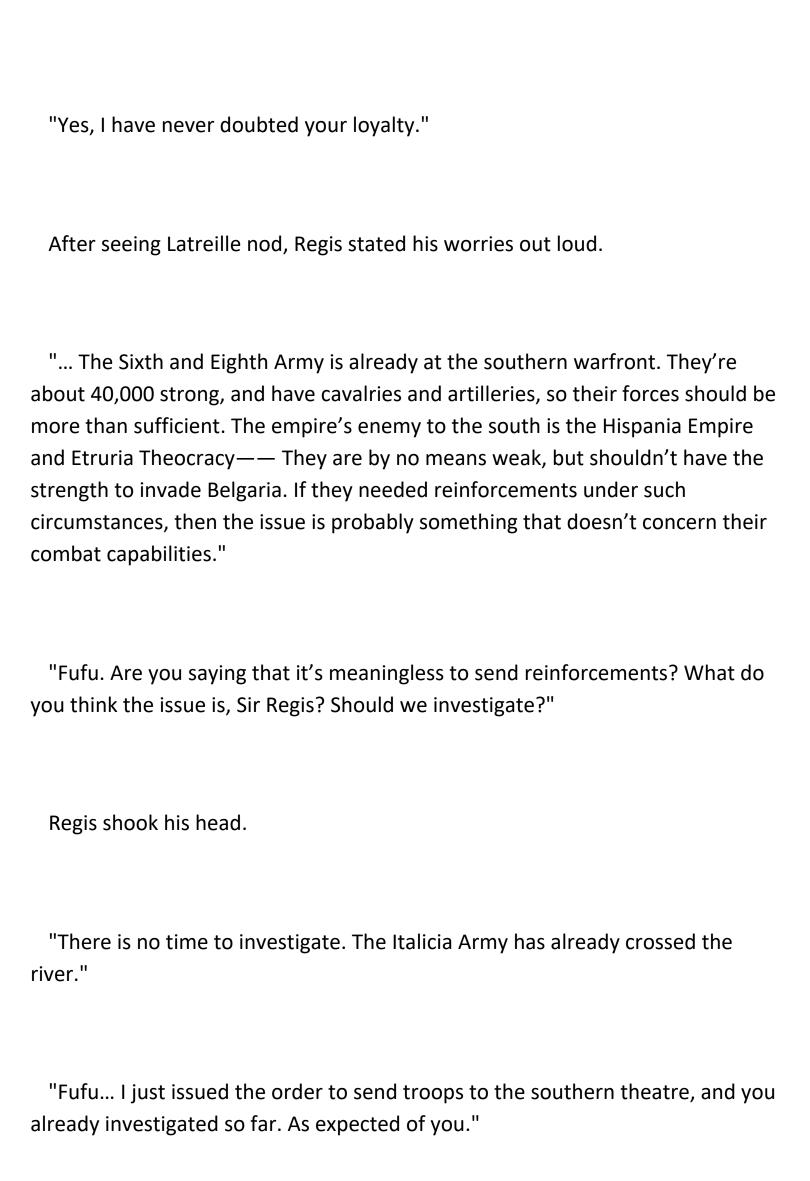
The Fourth Army was garrisoned in Fort Volks to defend against attacks by the neighbouring Varden Grand Duchy.
However, 4,500 of the soldiers were brought here without any orders from the Ministry of Military Affairs.
Which was bigger than a regiment.
Even though Altina marched her army here because she couldn't accept the news of Regis' death This could be interpreted as an armed revolt.
If the other party treat this as a revolt, then it wouldn't be a surprise if they chose to suppress them with force.
Regis used the excuse of "The Princess is here to congratulate the coronation of the new emperor, and needed adequate forces to escort her" to avoid this suspicion.
There were still quite a number of High Britannia soldiers left behind in the imperial territory, so this was a very good reason.

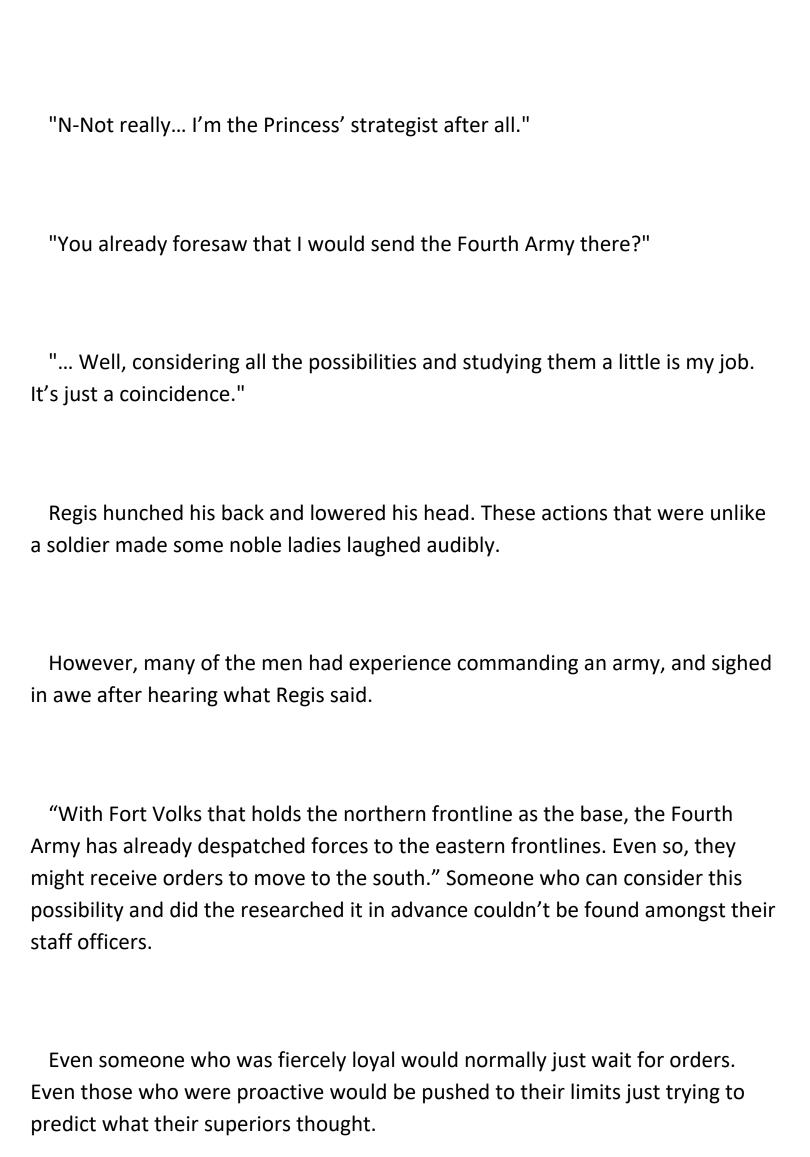


"You're always pushing troublesome matters to us Alright then! I will help you one more time."
She was saying the right things, but it would be troubling if the conversation ended here.
However, Regis never thought the other party would give a specific orders in such a place, so he couldn't tell Altina anything.
More accurately speaking —— Although he had expected numerous possibilities, it was impossible for him to tell Altina how to respond to each and every scenario.
Regis said to Altina quietly:
"Erm Well"
"Hmm?"
"Rank You understand?"









Compared to the impression of a general who already understood the situation, the incredible thinking of this scrawny youth was even more surprising.

Regis said:

"The Italicia Army has already crossed the Crimea river. From the reports sent to the capital, the enemy numbers about 20,000, and we need to consider possible reinforcements after they cross the river... Even if we send reinforcement now, we don't know how the situation in San Piero, which serve as our southern base is. There isn't time to find out. However, the enemy numbers isn't the reason why the war is going so badly, we can already tell that from the reports."

·· · · · ·

Latreille and the nobles listened quietly.

If it was in the past, they would have said: "You're making so many excuses because you don't want to go to the south right!?"

But Regis' reputation had soared after his achievements on numerous

battlefields, and his words carried more weight now.

The weight of a speech would change depending on who was the one saying it. Regis hated that, but many nobles believe in authoritarianism, and so do the military.

"The commanders of the Sixth and Eighth Army are both Lieutenant Generals. Their war merits and forces are similar so there isn't too much issues. But if their command hierarchy were combined, there would be confusion amongst the ranks and leads to coordination problems."

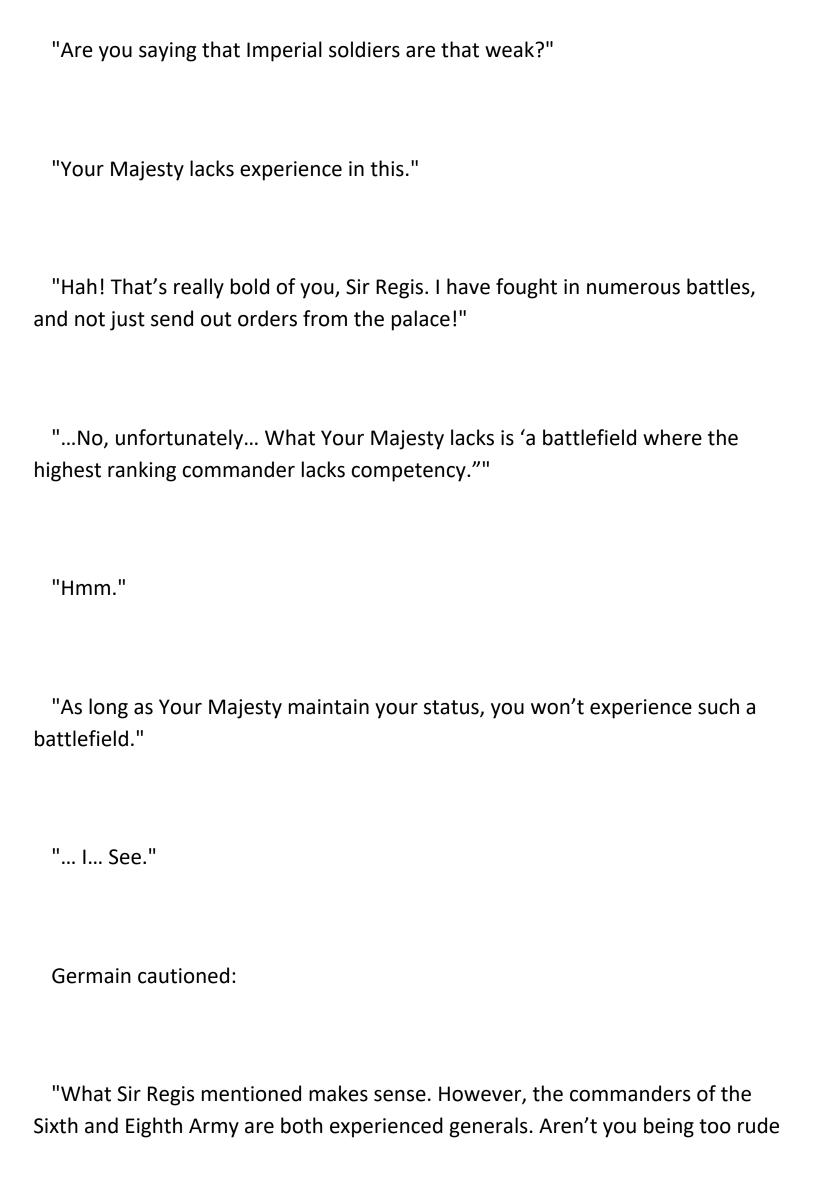
"Hmm... The south was garrisoned by the Sixth Army in the past. But due to the threat of the enemy getting stronger, the Eighth Army was transferred there last year. Back then, it has been established that the Sixth Army that is more familiar with the place will take command. The command structure have already been decided right?"

"If the commander of the Eighth Army is as outstanding as Your Majesty, then there wouldn't be any problems."

"Fu... is that flattery?"

"No, what I wish to tell you is that even a Lieutenant General might not act in a way you might expect."

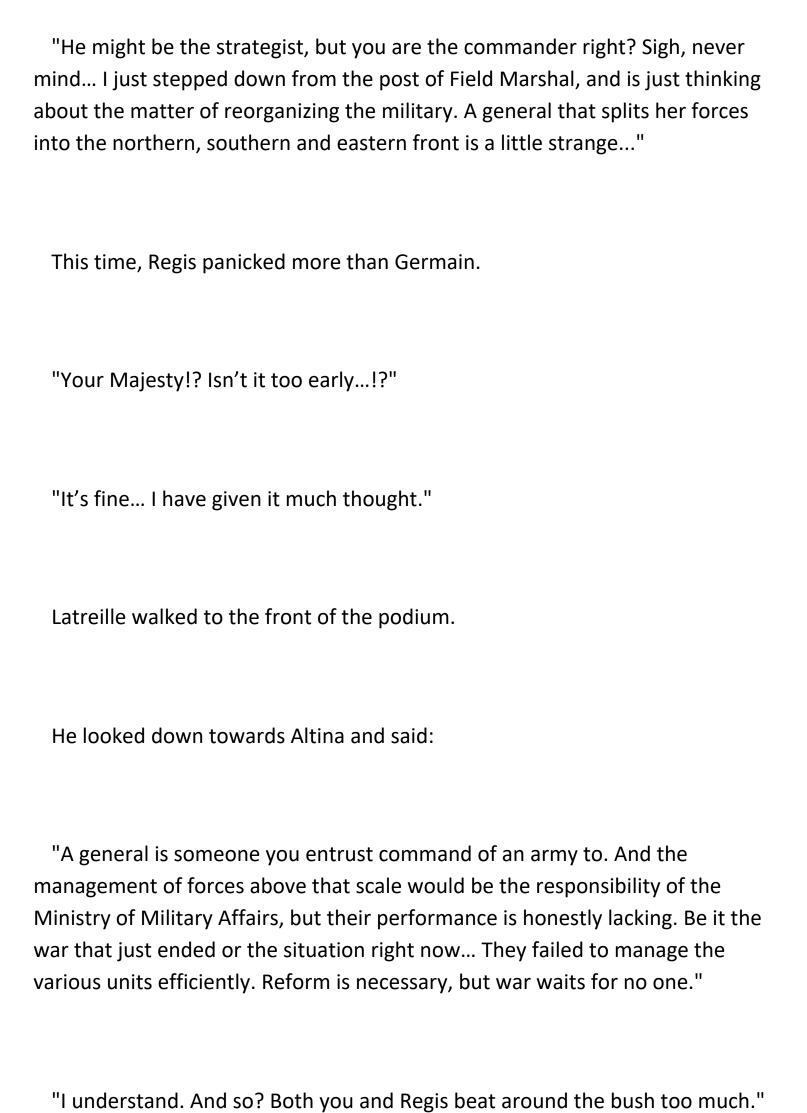
"Ooh?"
Latreille leaned forward.
Germain who was holding the rifle showed an expression of detest, but couldn't interject.
Regis continued:
"The commander has to make difficult decisions on the field. They have to do so before they are certain that is the correct choice—— Is the commander of the Sixth Army trustworthy? Even though he has sufficient forces, the frontlines got pushed back. Hence, it is only natural for the Eighth Army commander to be skeptical of the overall commander's abilities."
"If he don't follow orders, that would be a violation of regulation."
"That's true, but even if he does follows, he would do so timidly to minimize losses. If it come down to this, are they fighting the enemy or fighting the orders?"



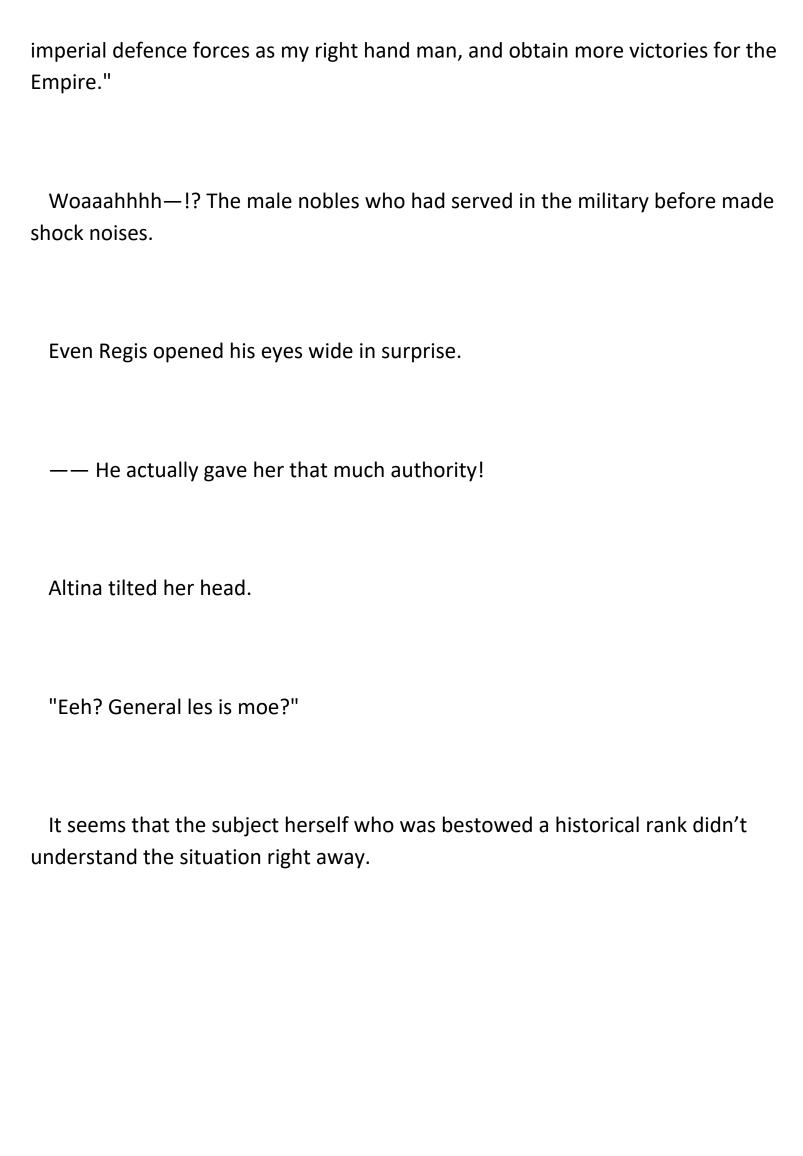
here?"
"I read the the battle reports they submitted. The Empire has the advantage of terrain and the enemy forces isn't that large If one of the commanders is as good as His Majesty, they wouldn't need to pull back the frontlines and request for aide."
"Is that really the case? Maybe the enemy commander is really skilled?"
"That might be true in a relative sense If that is more the reason so to not let the commanders from either army handle the situation."
"Hmm"
Latreille stopped their debate.
"I understand. Sir Regis has doubts about the generals commanding in the southern frontlines."
" I'm sorry to say so, but that is the case."

At this moment, a voice could be heard from the nobles saying "How brusque".
The commander of the 6th army hailed from a grand noble in central after all. There must be someone who was close to him here.
They might be infuriated that the commander's competency was being questioned, but since Regis who was highly regarded said so, they couldn't refute strongly and could only grumble about it.
Well, it's only a matter of time that I will earn the ire of the grand nobles in central.
Regis wasn't bothered at all, but Altina glared at the direction the complaint came from and lectured:
"Isn't it even more brusque to hide and grumble!? Come out here!"
Wahh Regis stopped her in a hurry.
He felt happy about what she did for him, but things was becoming troublesome.

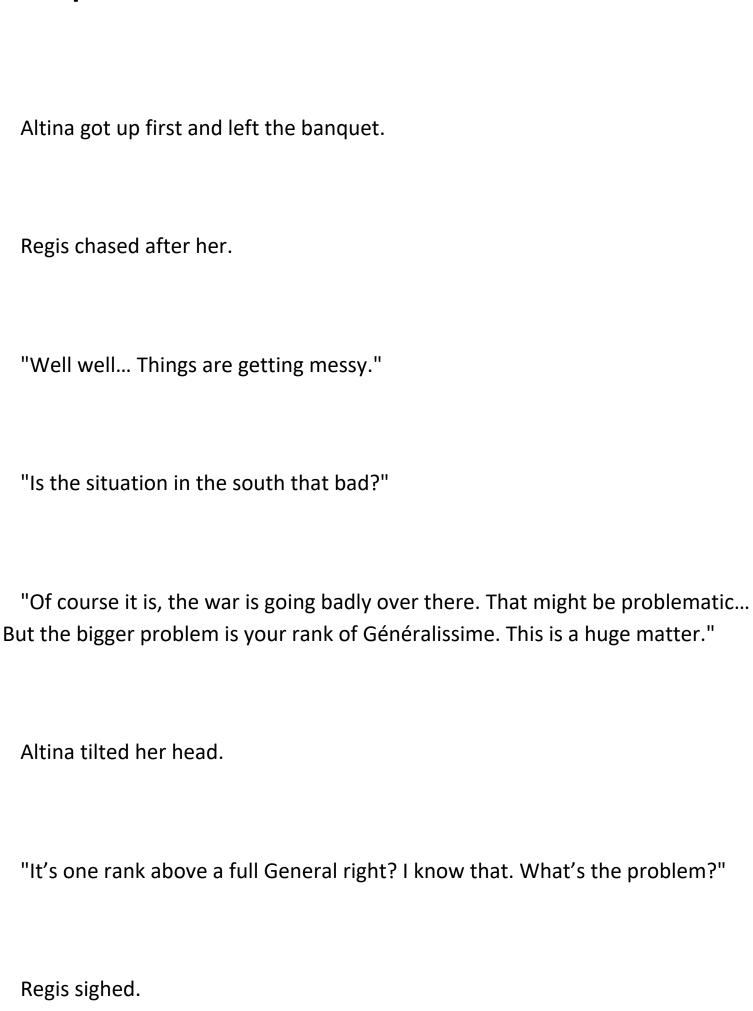
Latreille said with a wry smile:
"It's hard to speak your mind in the presence of all the other nobles. Sir Regis, let me guess what you want to say—— You want me to appoint Argentina as the overall commander of the southern warfront, correct?"
Regis closed his eyes.
" It is as Your Majesty says."
Altina raised a hand.
"Whatever, it's fine. If things get easier for Regis, we will be able to win."
"P-Princess"
Latreille smiled wryly:

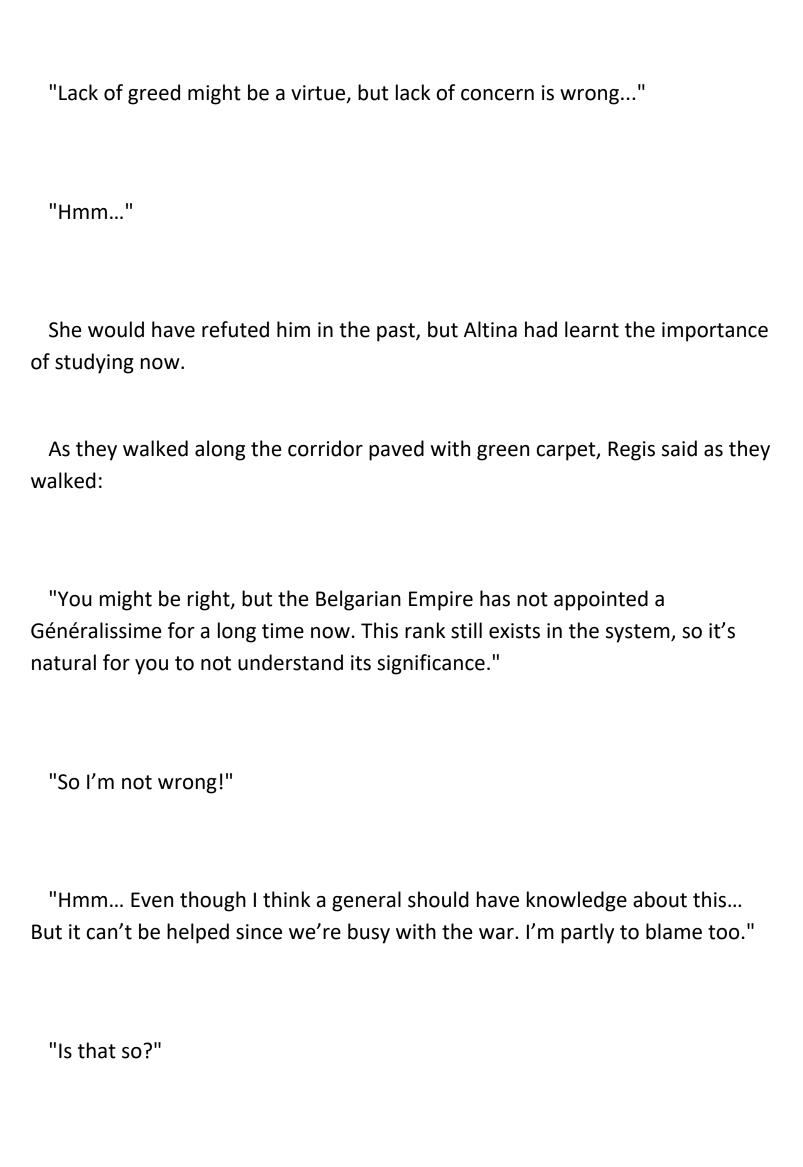


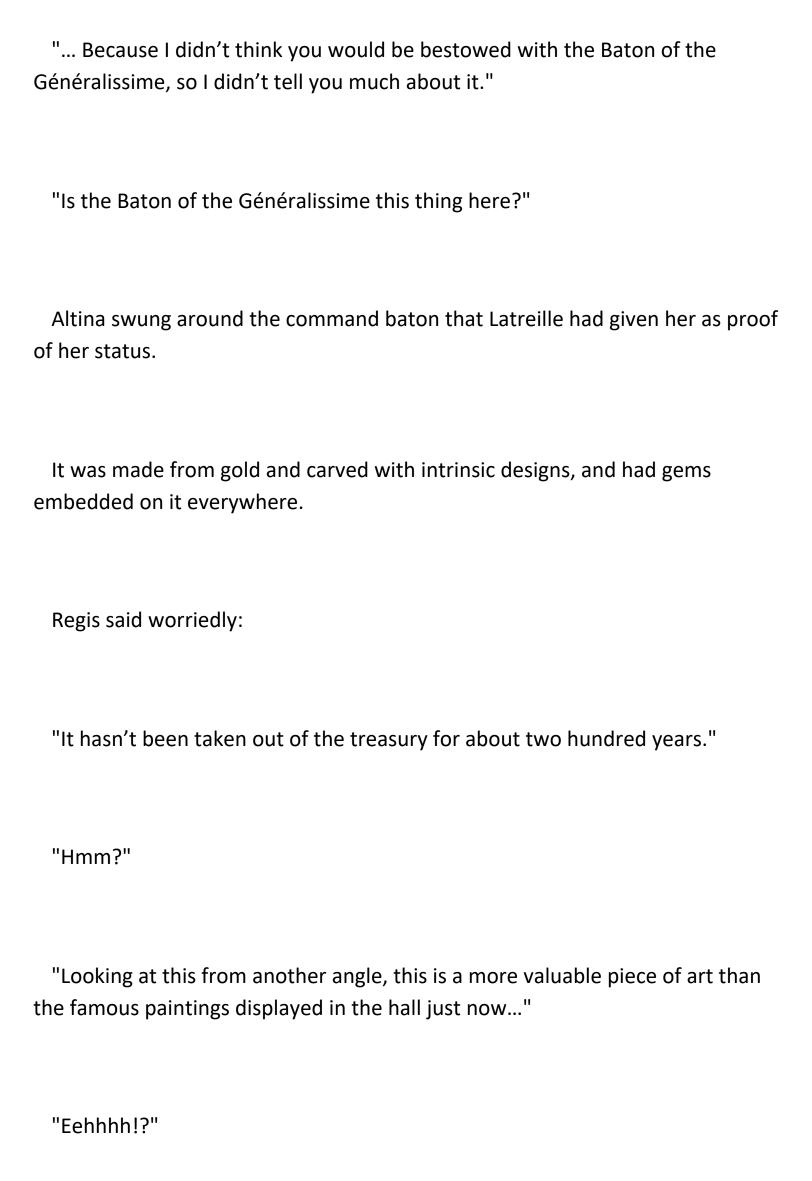


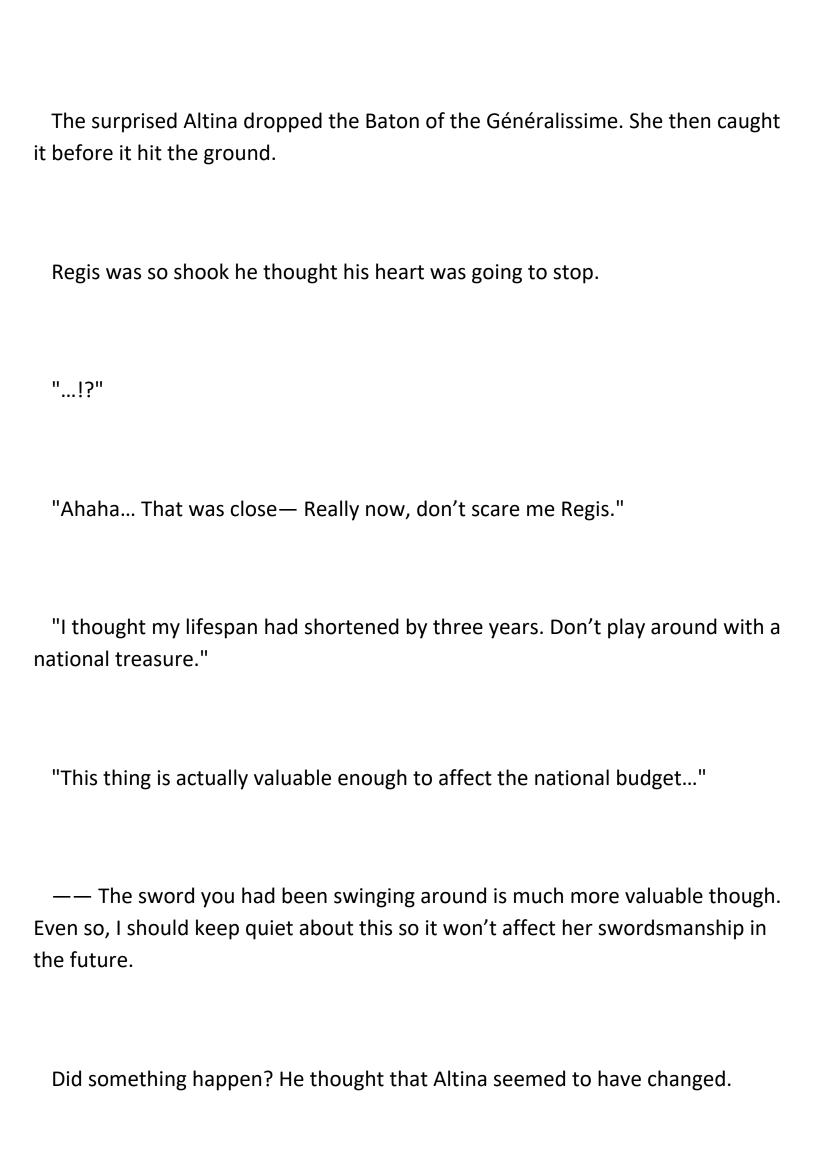


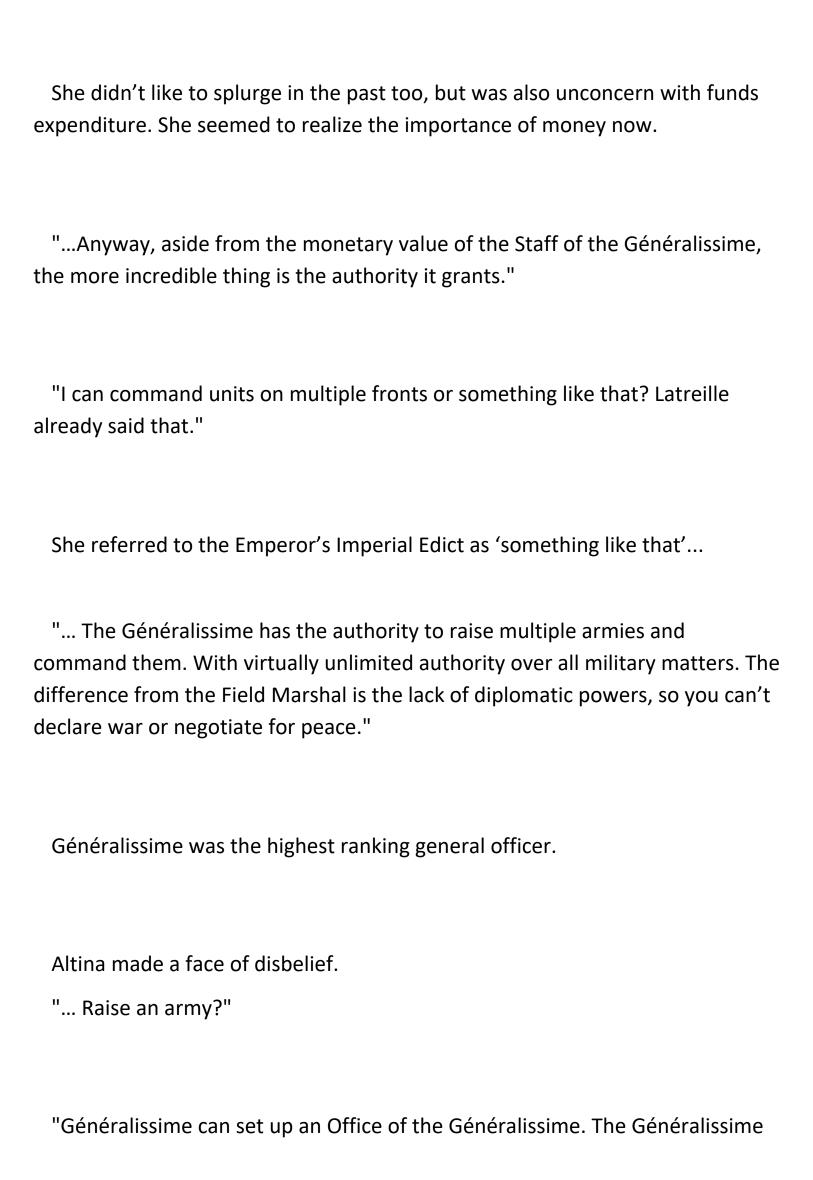
Chapter 3: Southwards

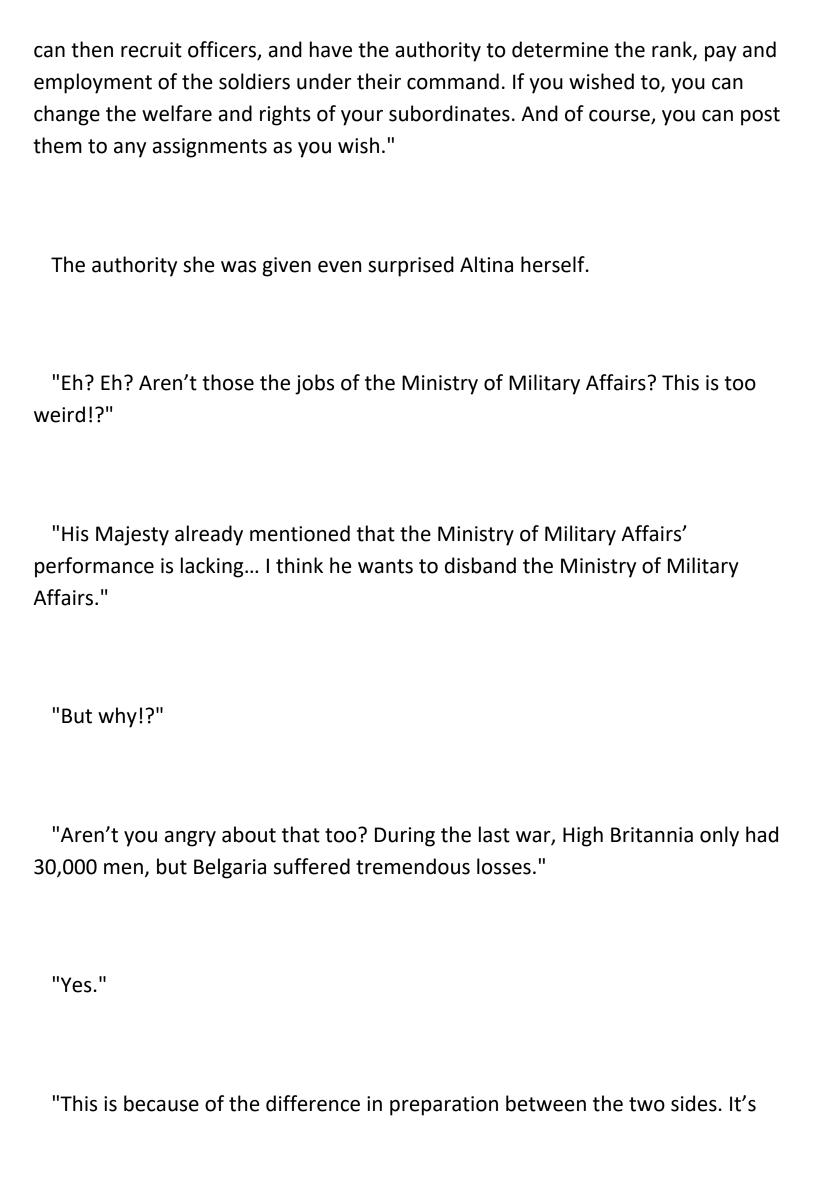


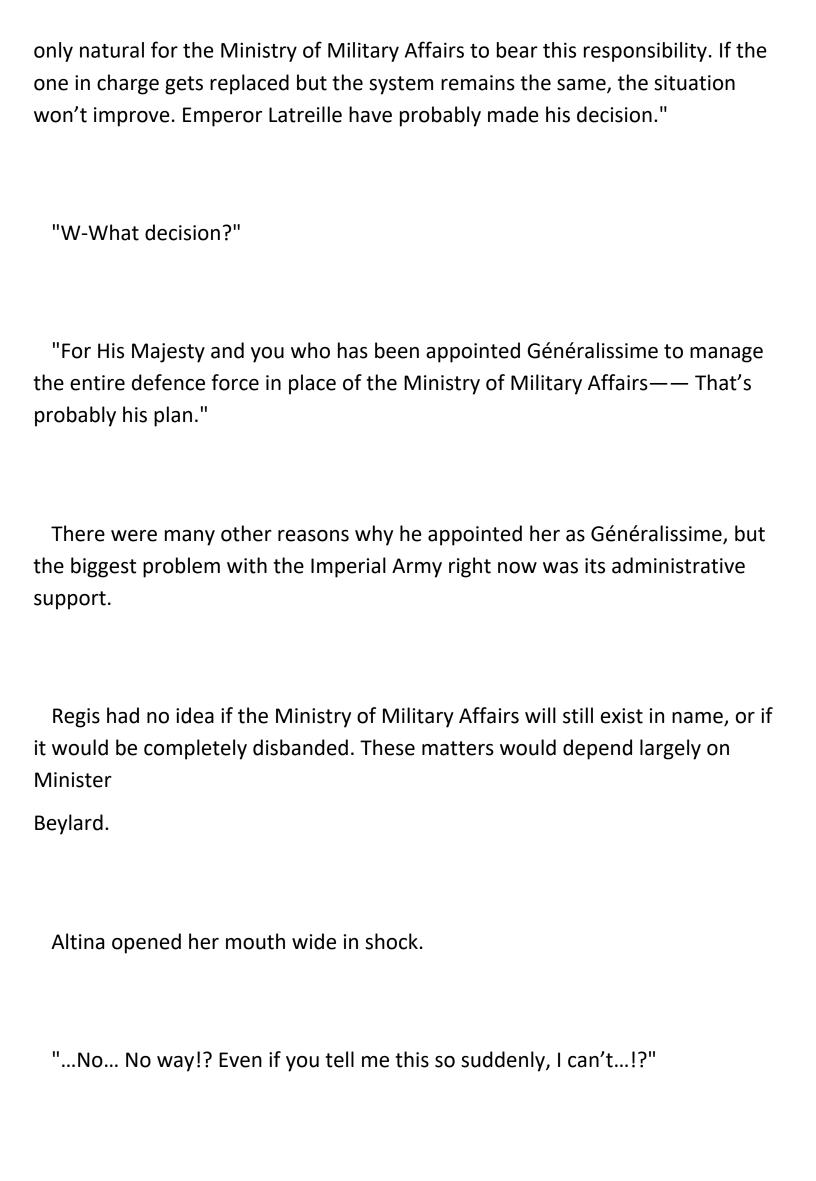


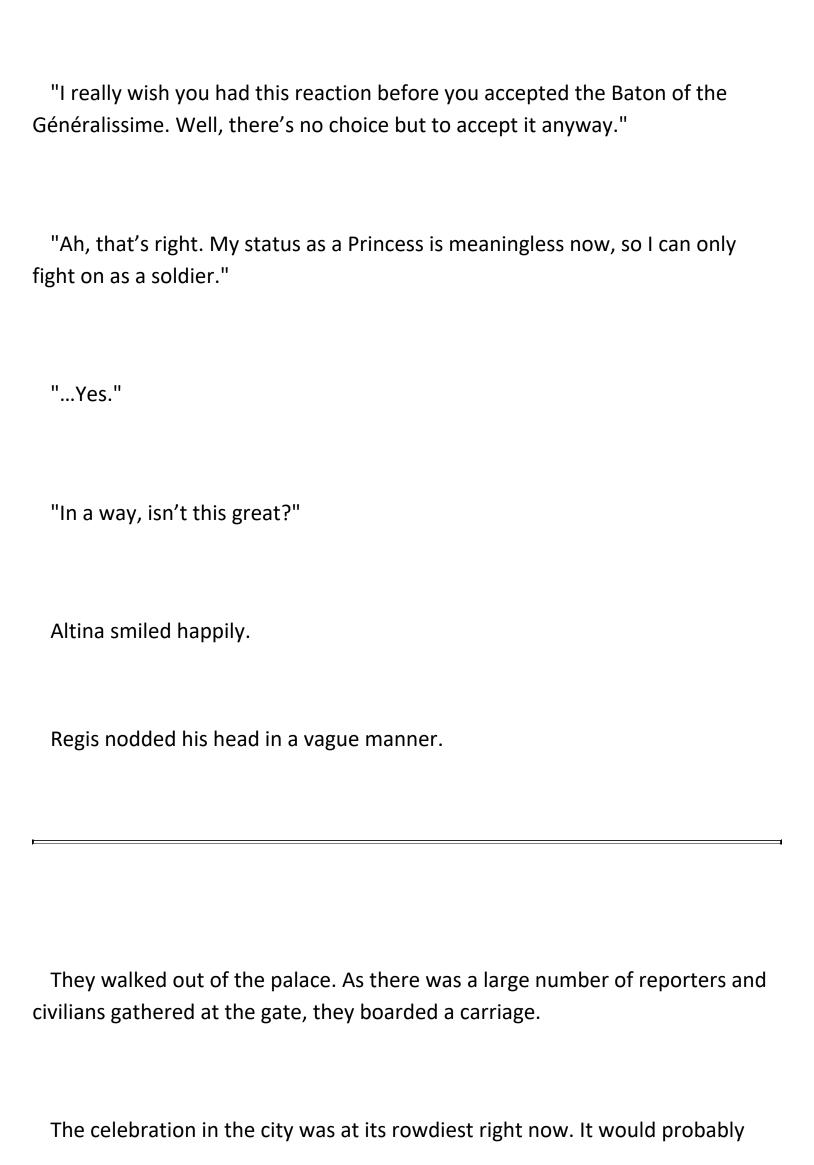




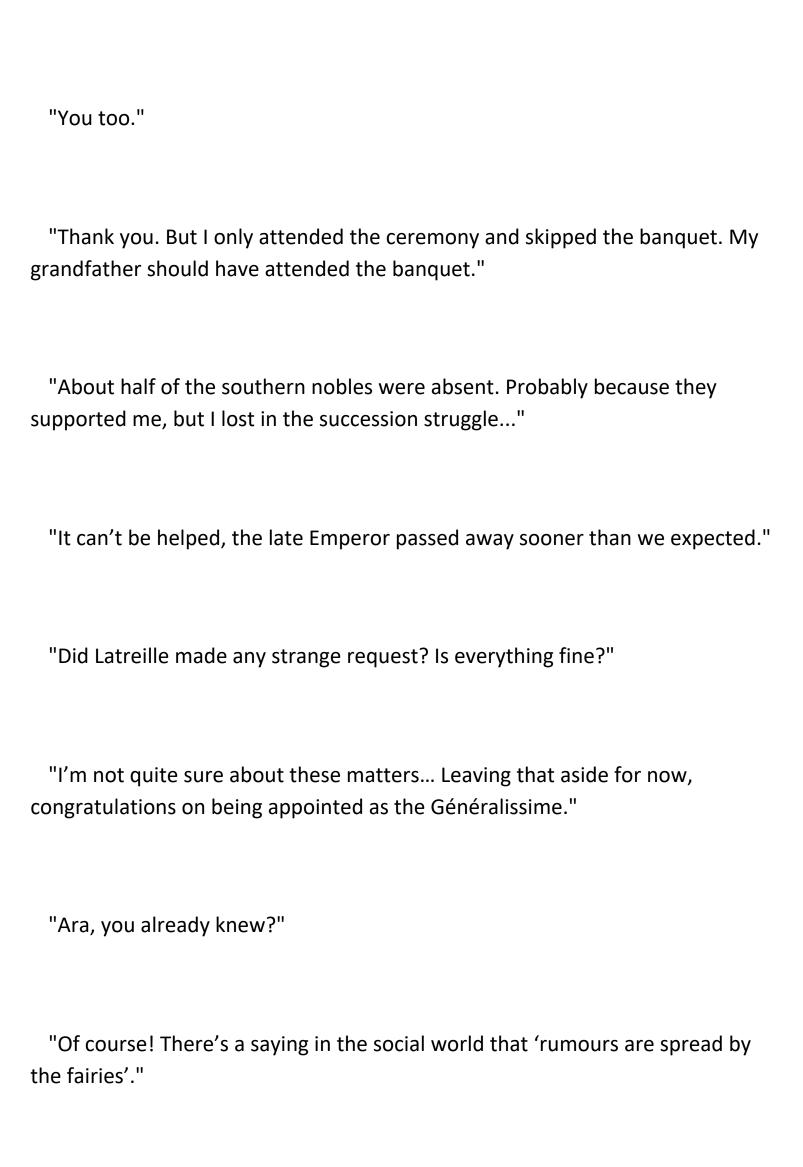




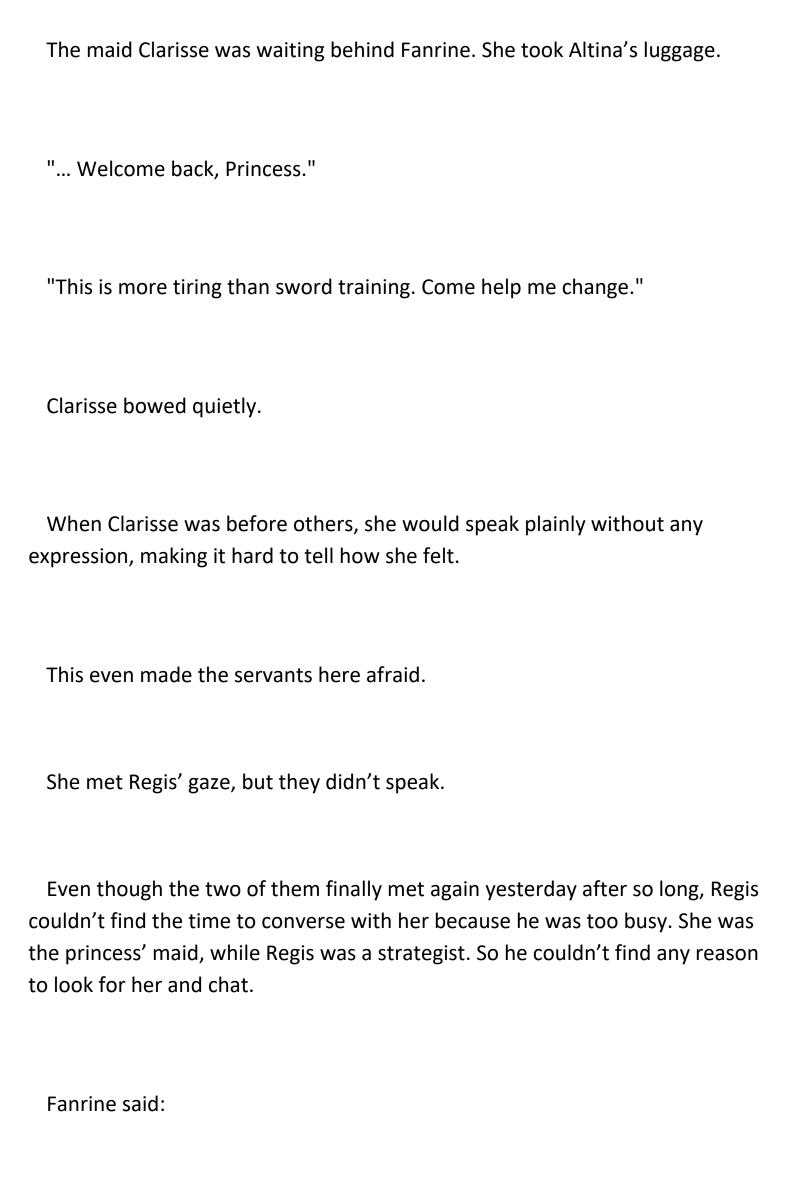


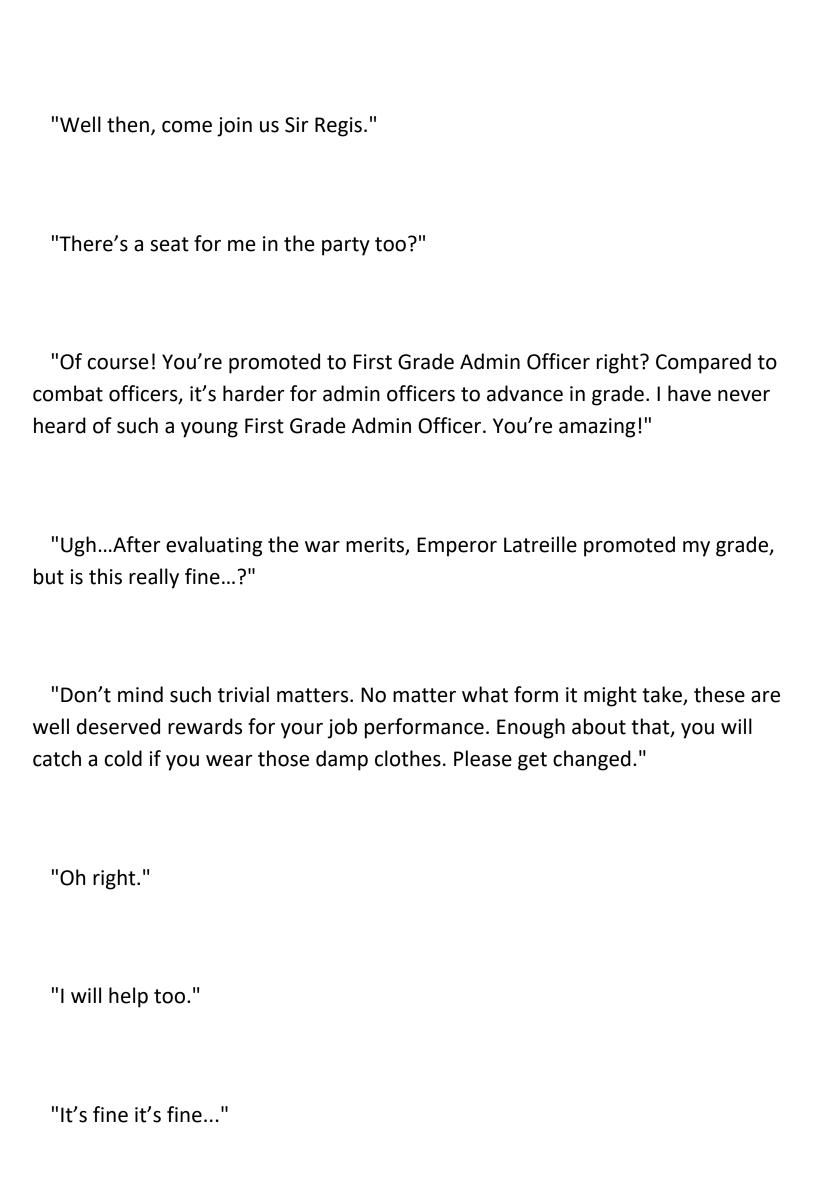


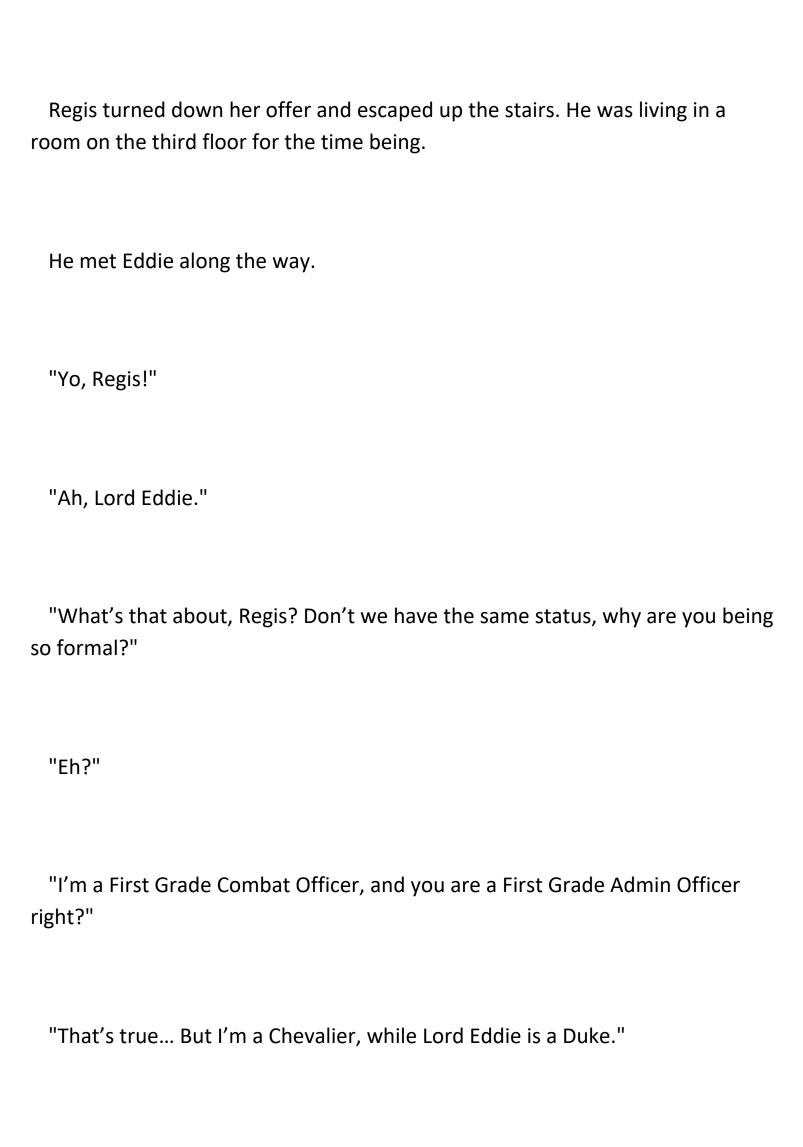
last for a week before it ends.
The driver did as he was instructed earlier, avoiding the main roads and took the long way around half the capital before reaching a certain mansion.
The mansion of the Tiraso Laverde House——
As she wasn't on good terms with the other nobles and the First Army, those close with Altina didn't stay in the palace, and lodged here instead.
Heavy Infantry from the Fourth Army guarded the gates as if this was the headquarters on a battlefield. They even erected their unit flags inside the courtyard.
Regis and Altina alighted from their carriage/
The servants lined up to welcome them.
The door in the entrance opened, and an aristocratic lady walk out from the depths of the corridor. It was Fanrine.
"Thank you for your hard work, Princess Argentina, Sir Regis."



When the carriage ferrying Regis and the others were still caught in traffic, the nobles who was attending the banquet had probably sent their servants back to relay the news.
As the Tiraso Laverde House was the leader of the southern nobles, they have a strong intelligence network even in the capital.
Fanrine ushered them into the mansion.
"It isn't as extravagant as the banquet in the palace, but we have also prepared a simple celebration party. If it is not too much trouble we will be honoured if you can relax and dine with us?"
Altina clapped her hands together.
"Alright! I didn't have any time to spare since morning, I'm famished!"
"Fufu, that's wonderful."
"Let's get changed before heading to the dining hall!"
"Okay."

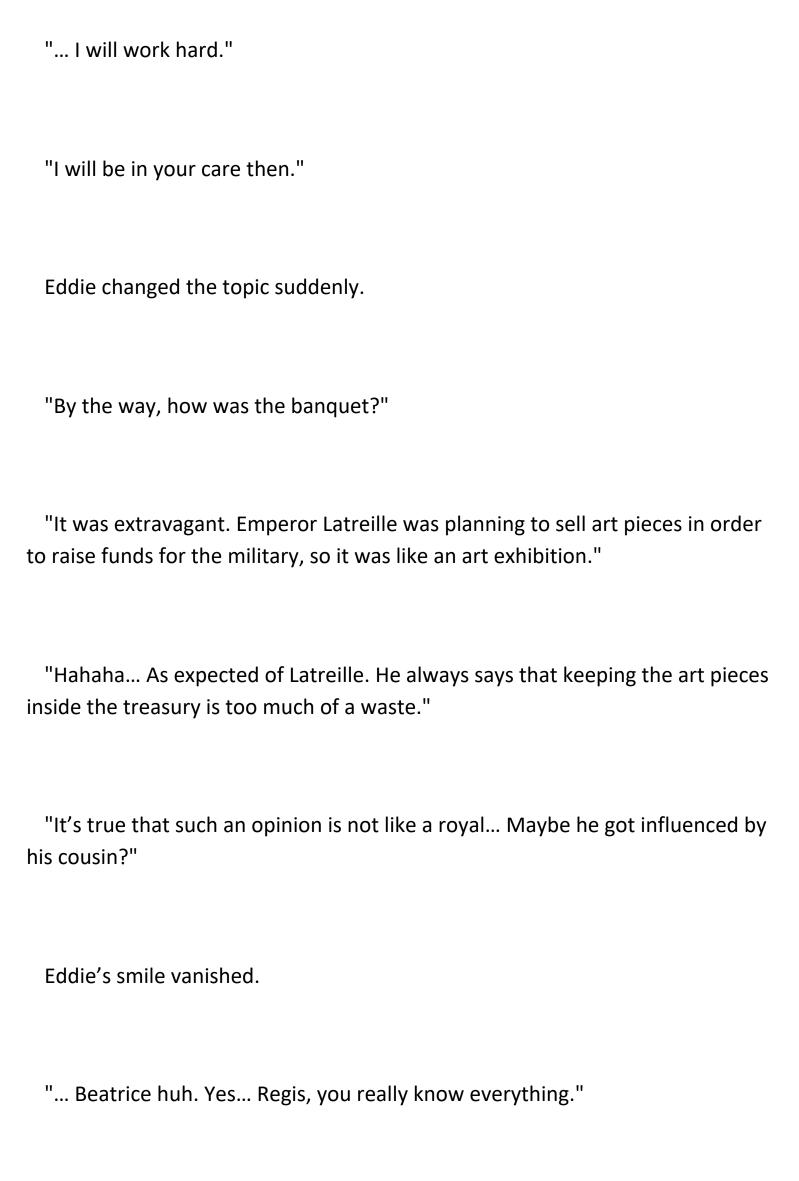




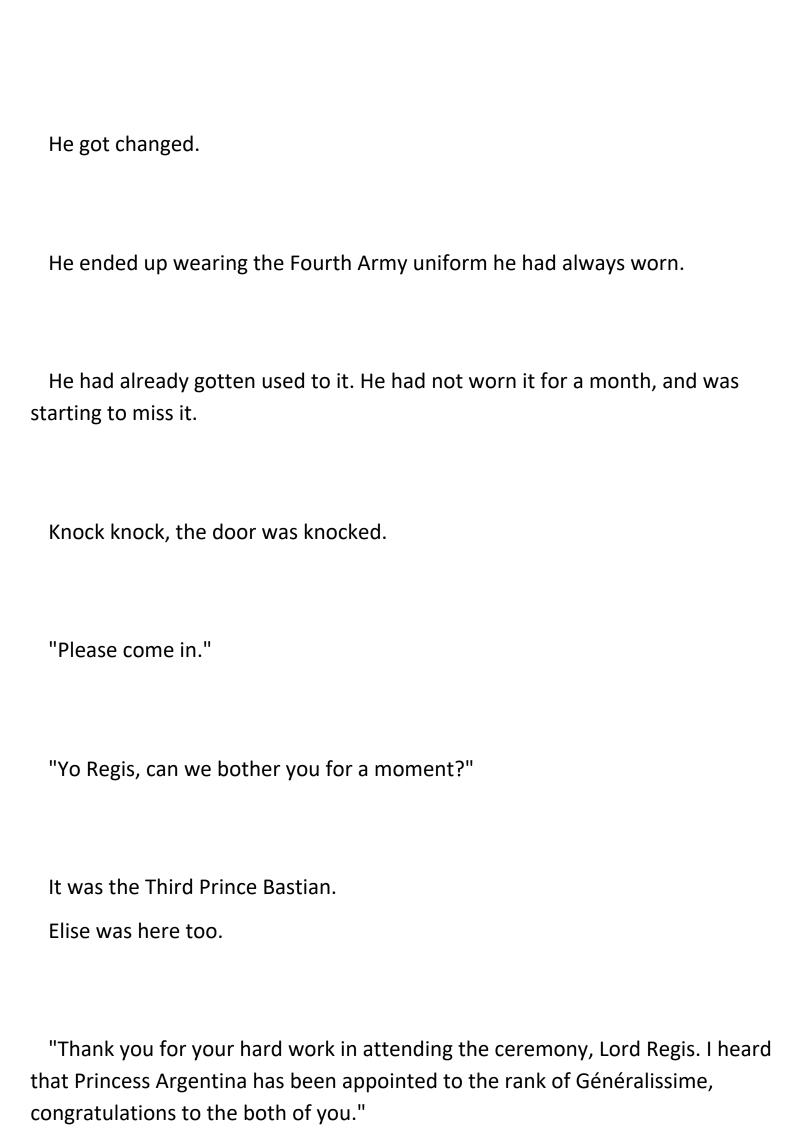




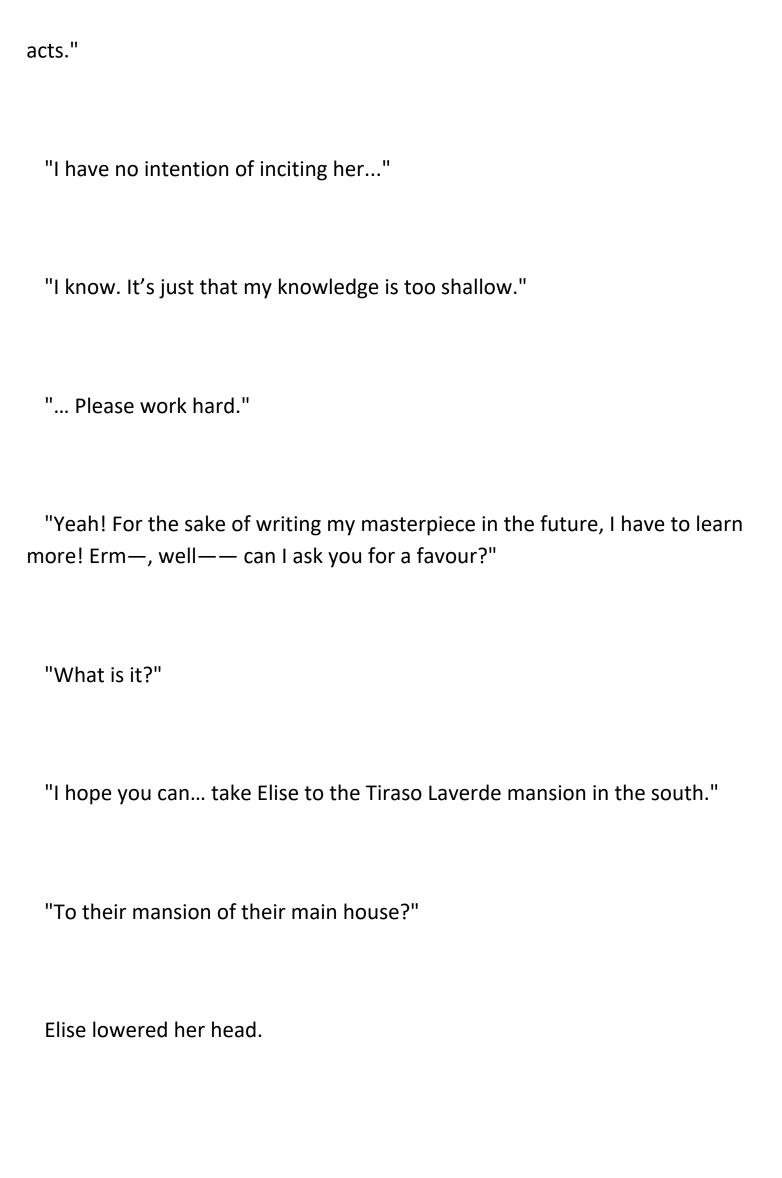


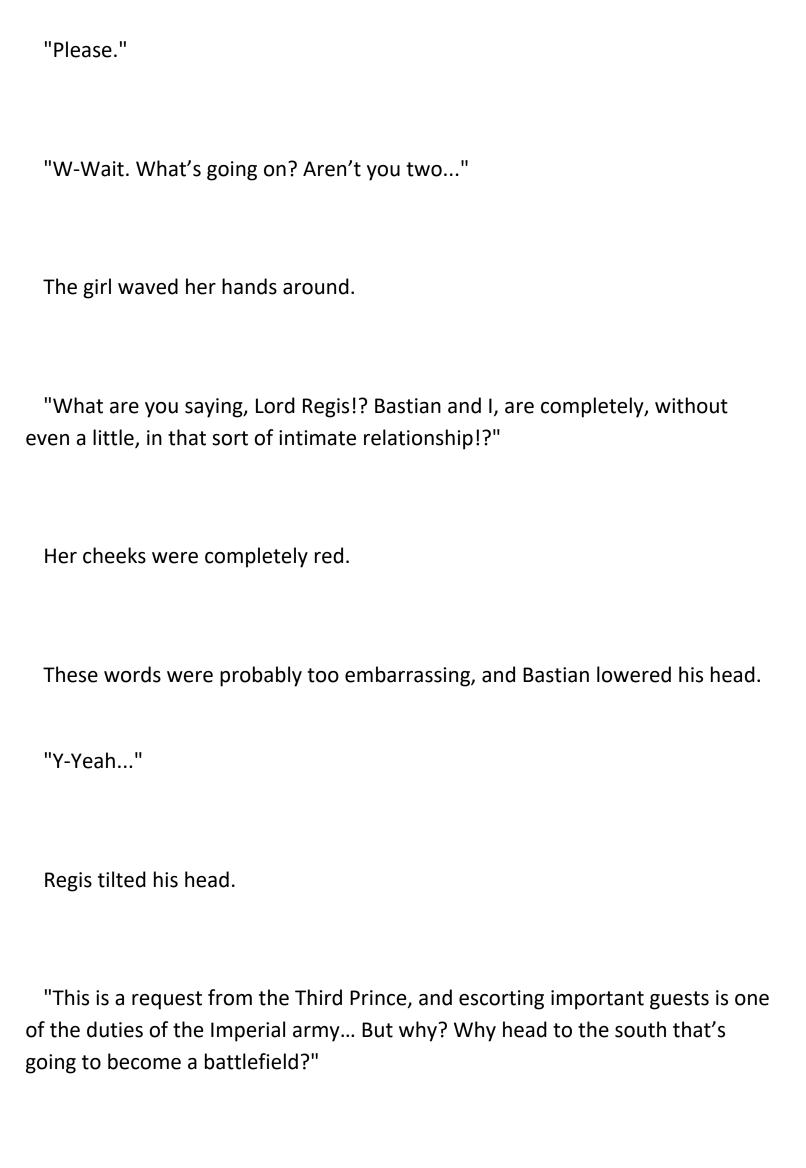


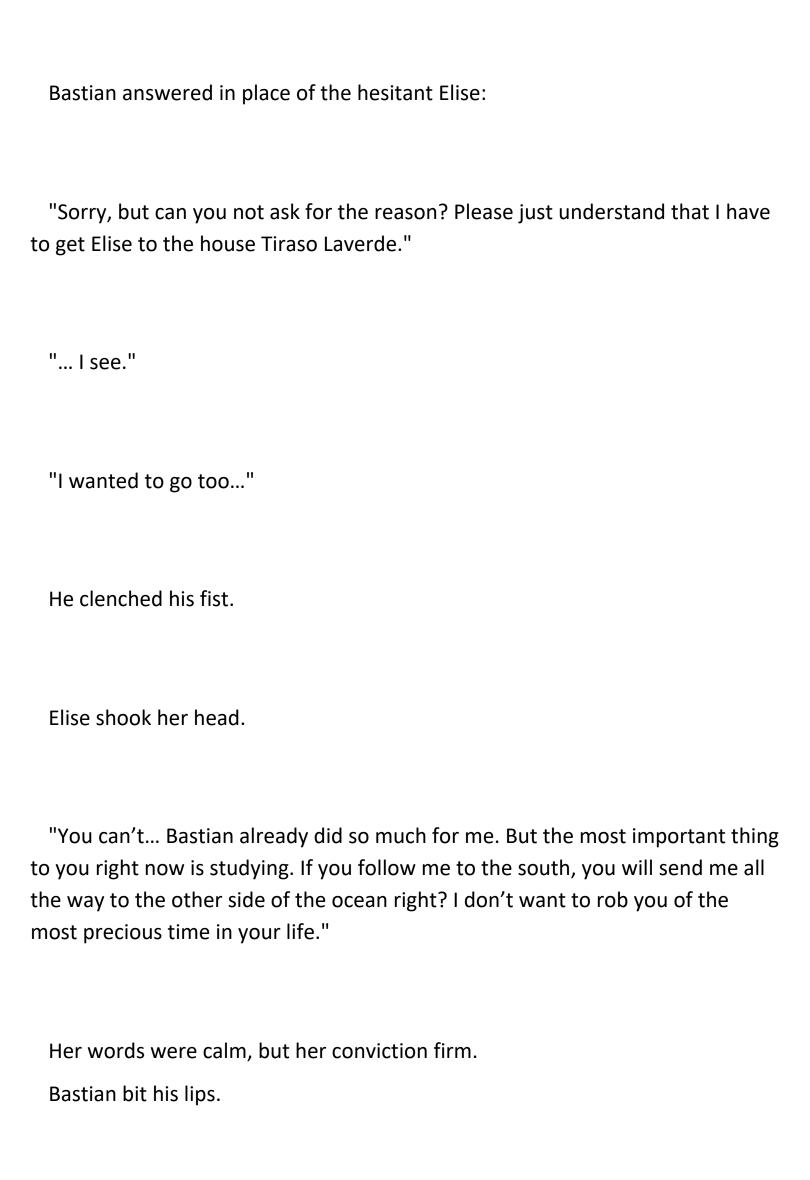
He sighed.
However, Regis didn't know the details. He couldn't even recall the name Beatrice. Did he forgot, or was she not very well known?
He was intrigued, but this was just an idle chatter along the corridor. It was best not to delve too deeply into this.
"Let's discuss this next time."
"Yah That's right Best not let them wait too long."
"Well then, I will go get changed."
"Right, see you in the dining hall."
Regis bid Eddie farewell, and returned to his room.

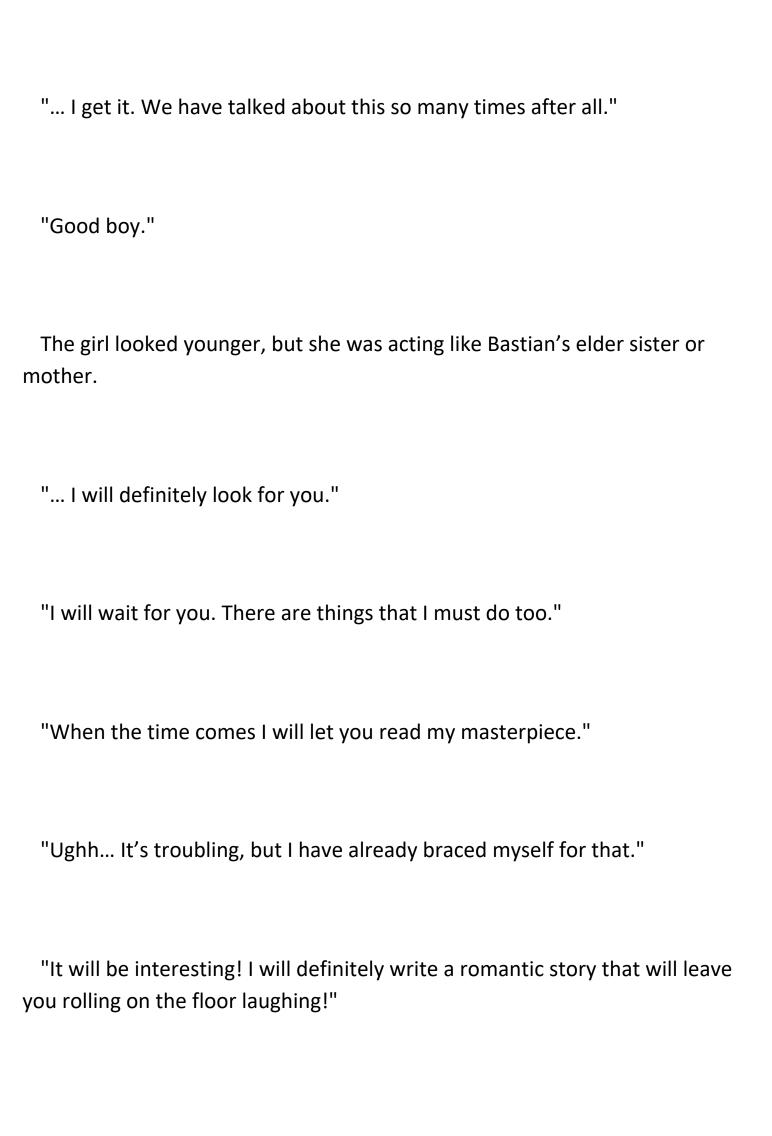


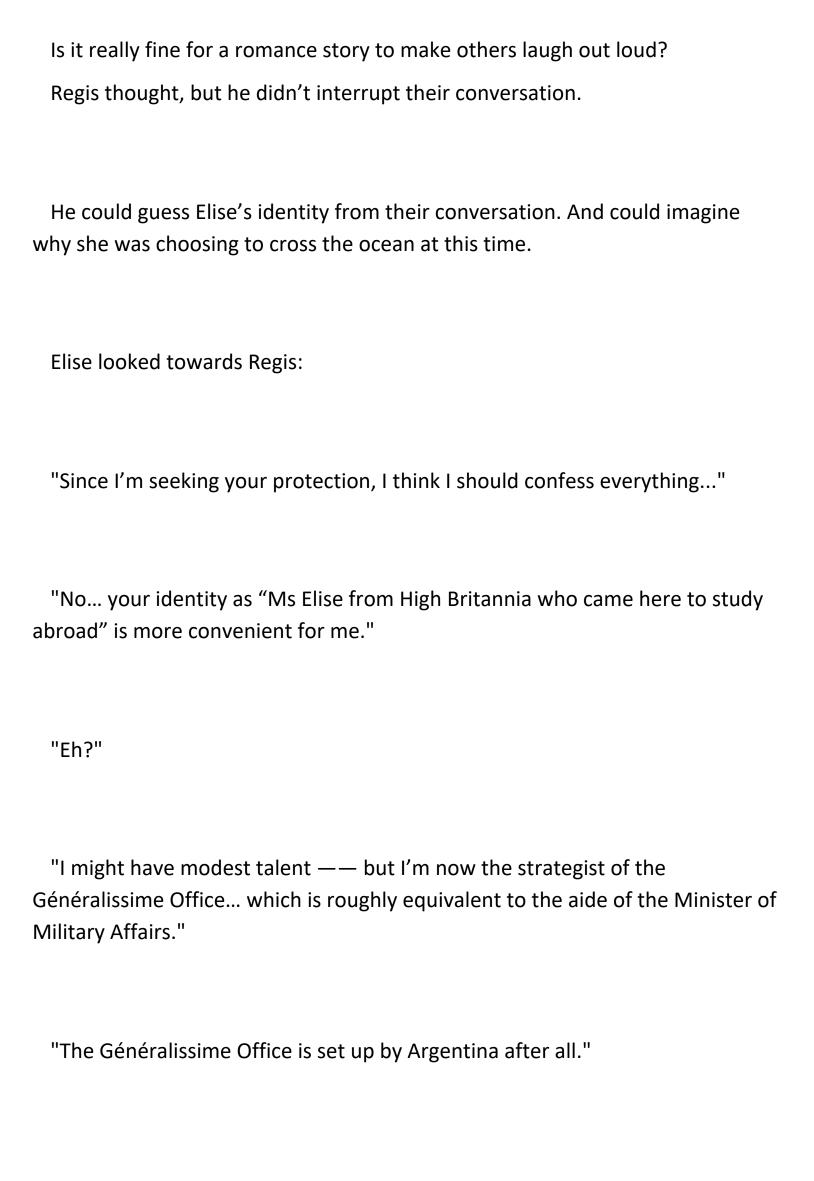
This girl who hailed from the Kingdom of High Britannia would sometimes show an air of nobility.
Even though she looked just like an ordinary girl, but her proper demeanour and choice of words made others straighten their posture.
Bastian smiled awkwardly:
"I heard that you are heading south?"
"Yes."
"I see It's a shame, but I will be staying in the capital. There are things I still need to do, and I need to continue my studies under Professor Bourgine."
"I understand. Your Highness isn't a soldier anyway, so there is no reason for you to head into a warzone."
"Even though I think I should work together with Argentina But she can't think for herself at all, and will put complete trust in Regis' words whenever she







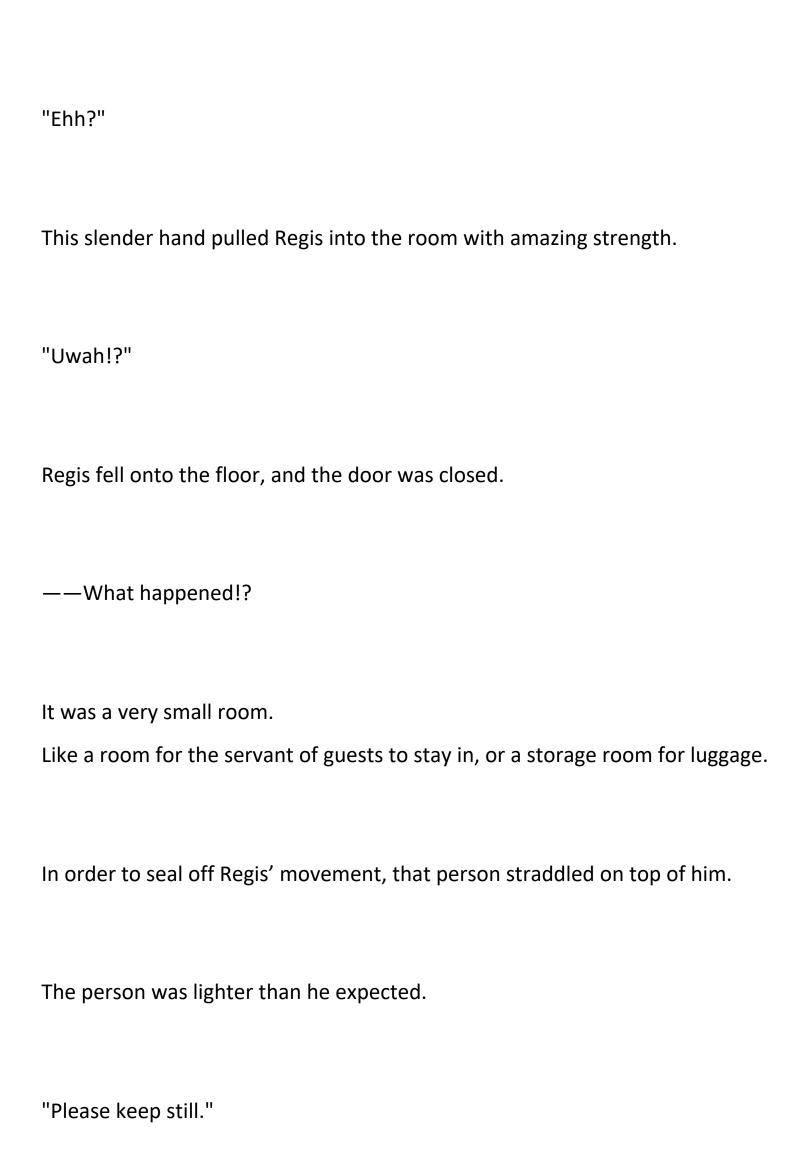


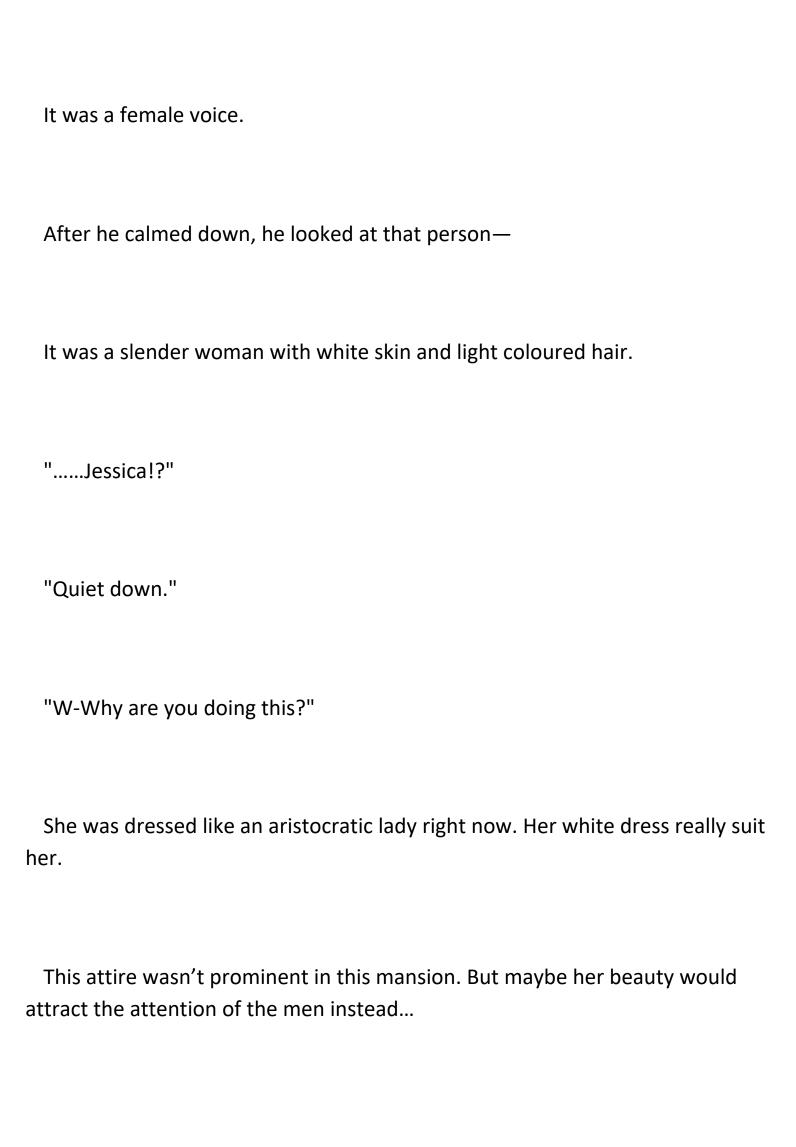


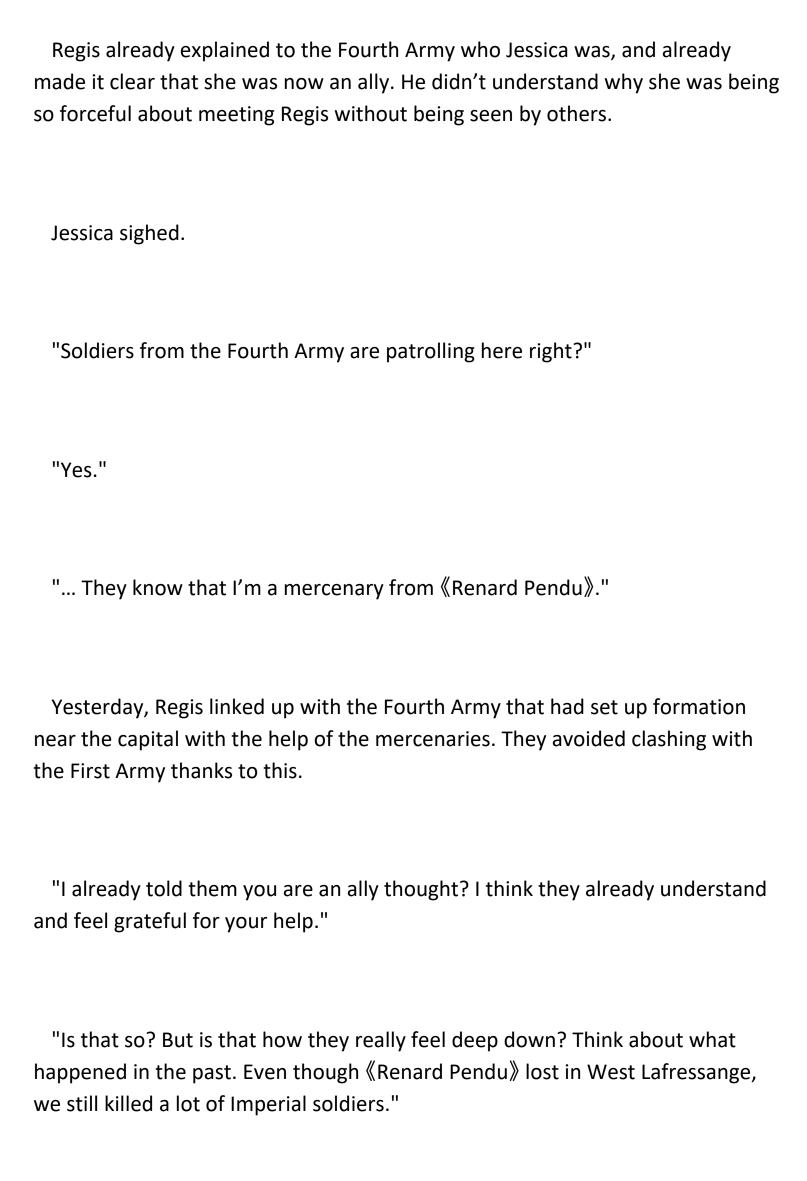


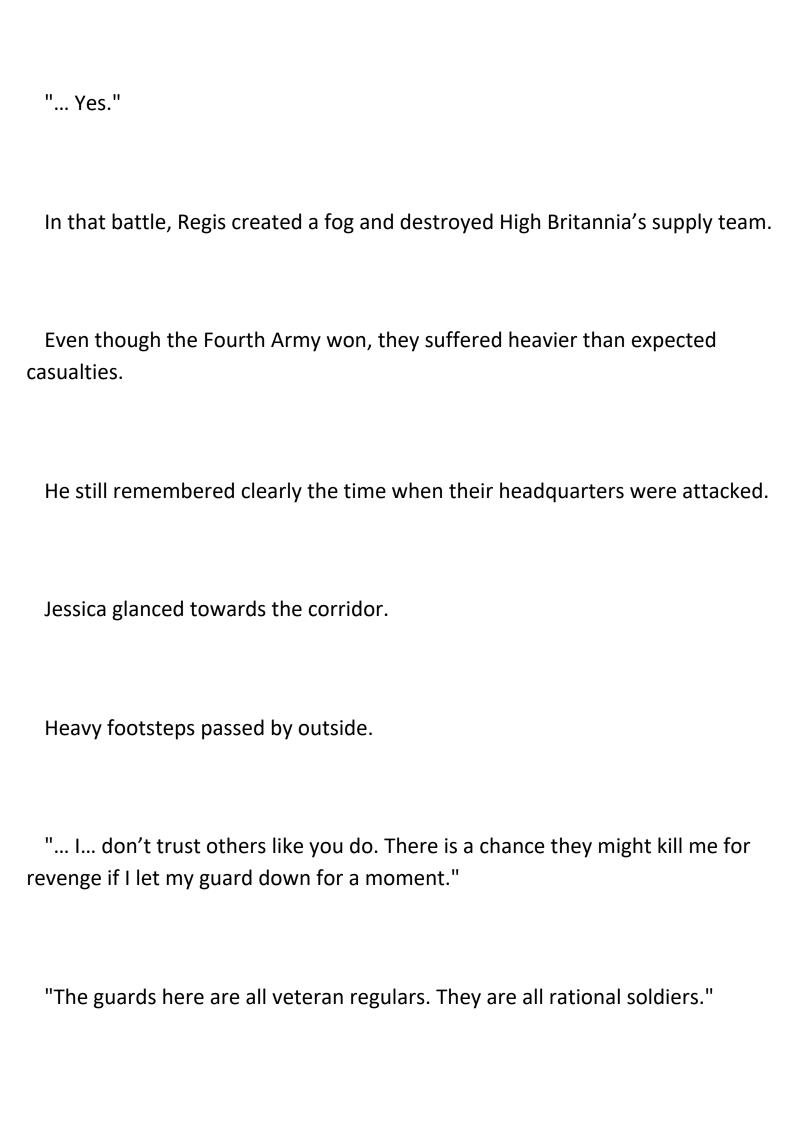


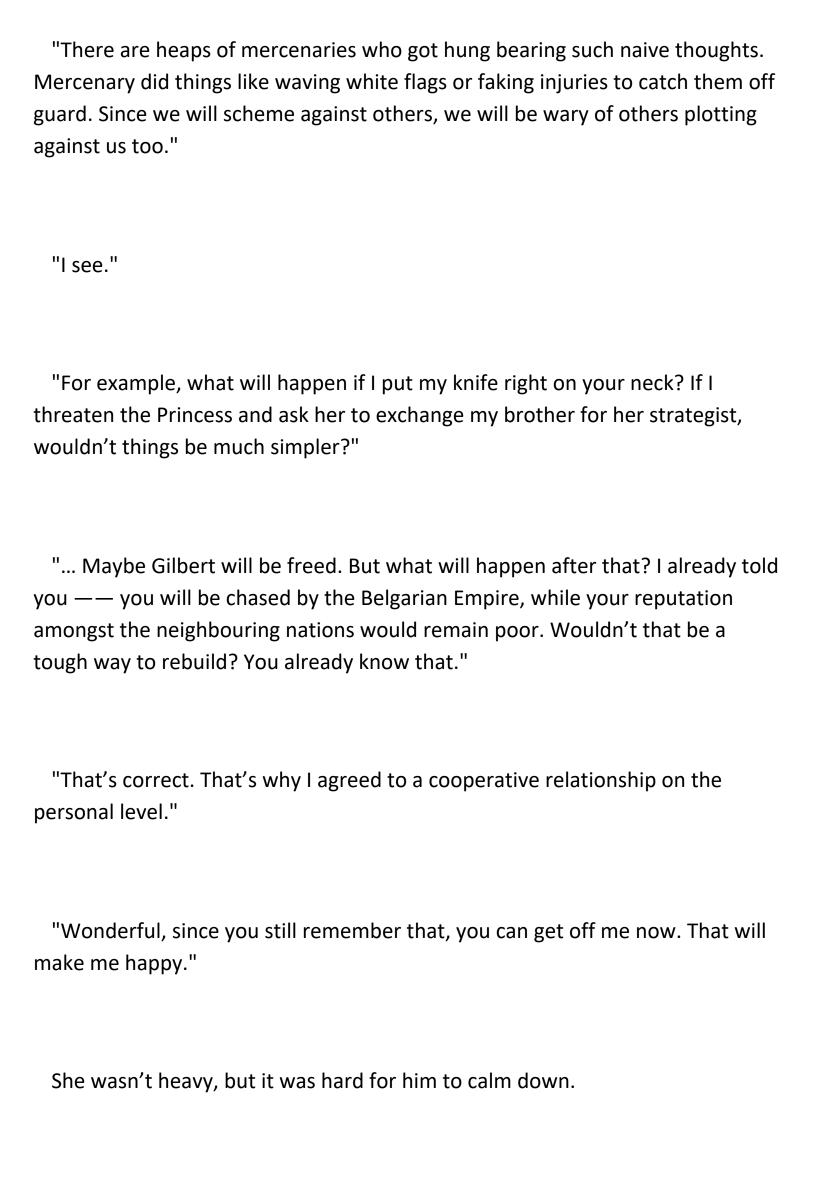
And tears shaped just like a crystal came out from the corner of her eyes.
As they wished to spend their remaining time alone, Bastian and Elise didn't attend the party and left the mansion.
After making public his allegiance to the Argentina faction, he no longer has a place within the palace, and was now staying with his grandfather Marquis Bergerac.
Regis promised to notify them before the army set off.
He left his room and headed for the dining hall.
I was already a little late.
A door along the corridor suddenly opened.
A pale slender hand reached out and grabbed Regis' sleeve.





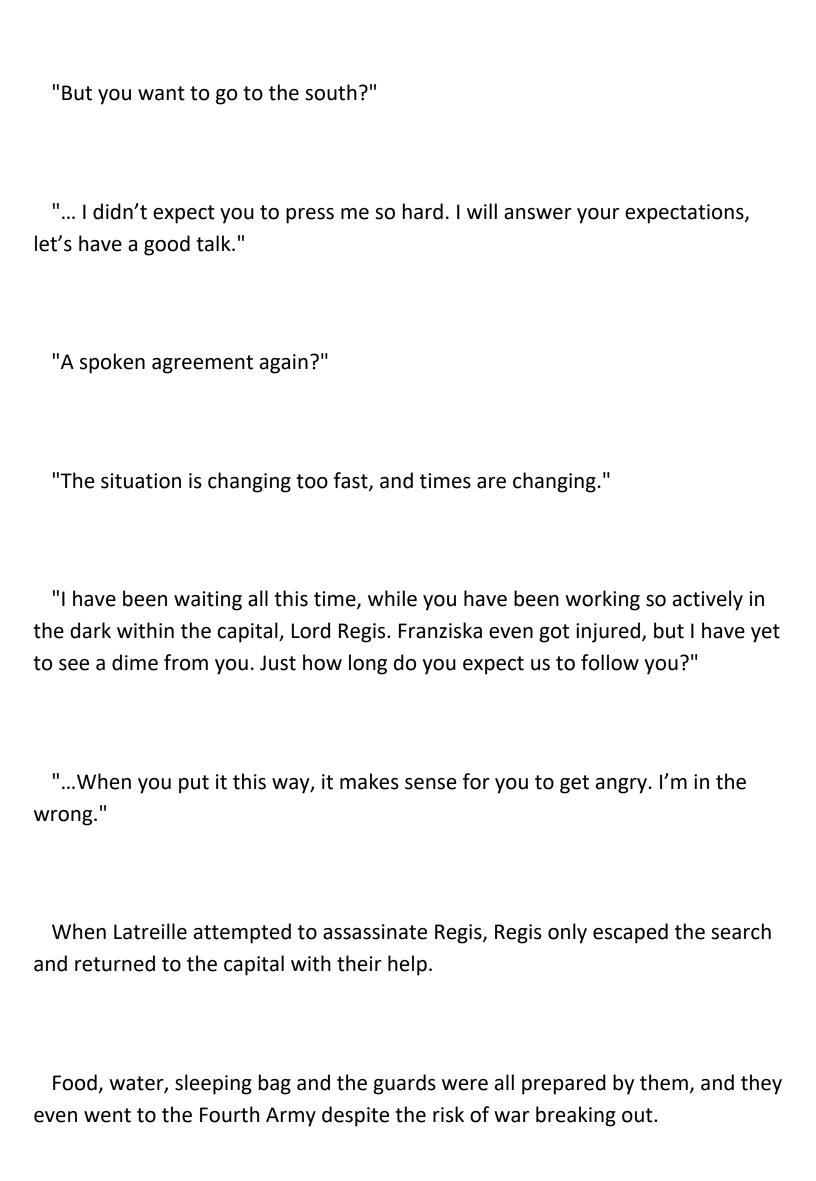






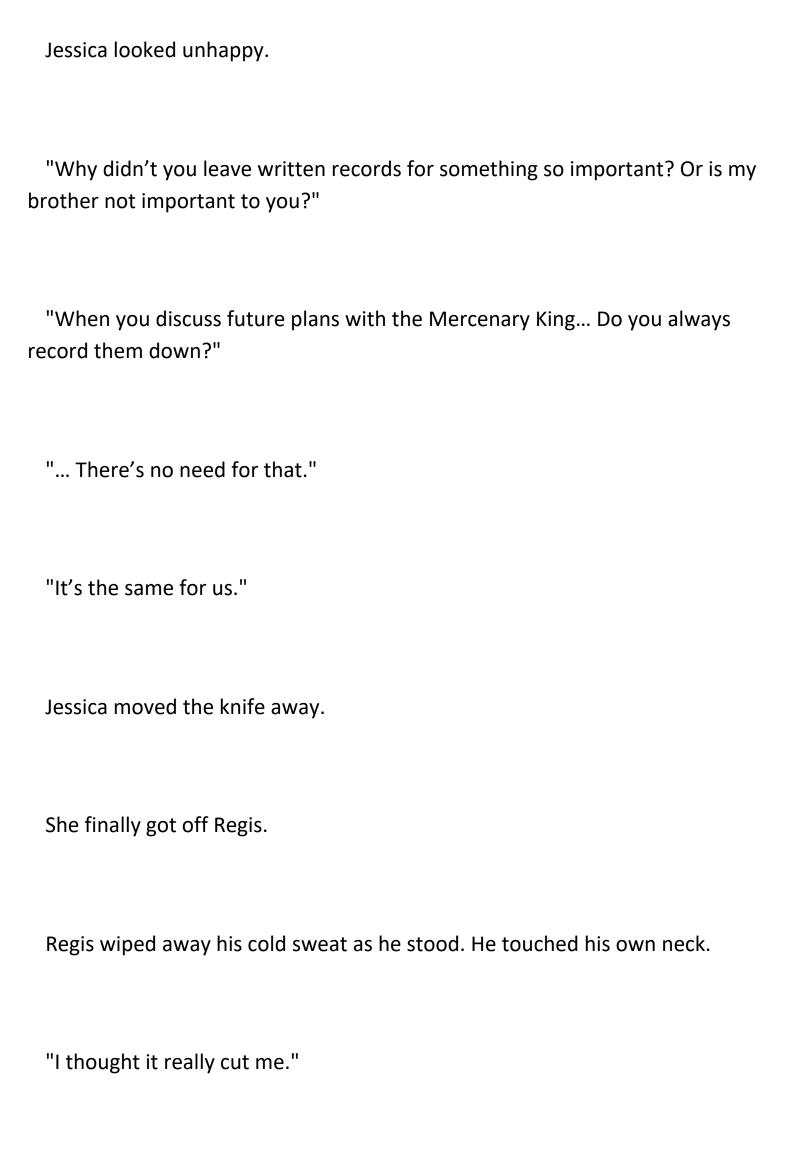
He could feel Jessica's body warmth seeping into him.
Even if he ignored that aspect, having a woman forcefully pressed him down was tugging at his psychological scar, and he was sweating cold bullets right now.
" You should be the one that needs to remember. Heading to the south? What's with that? My brother is in Fort Volks!?"
Anxiety leaked from Jessica's voice.
It was a rare sight since she seldom show her feelings.
Hmm, Regis thought about it.
"There are 700 people left in 《Renard Pendu》. You can't rescue Gilbert from Fort Volks with this numbers. So you wanted to use me as a hostage in the beginning. But after considering it, you decided it was better to help me instead right?"
"Sigh But that's only under the condition that my brother will be saved."

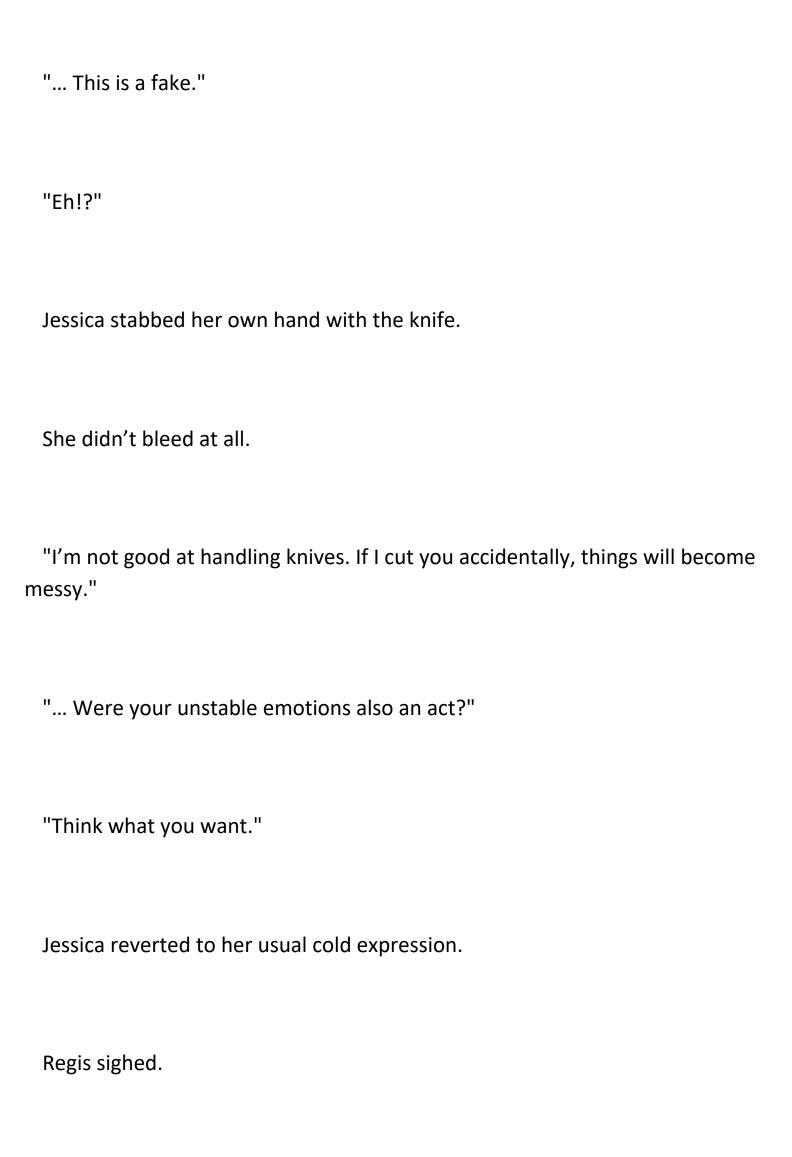
"Aren't you too anxious?"
"You won't understand. The members psyche are already at their limits. They are only bearing with it in the hope that my brother will be rescued But they are guys who can't conceal their feelings that well. Surrounded by imperial forces and living in tents on the outskirts of the capital, they are as tense as men with ropes tied to their necks, walking along the cliff."
" It's that bad?"
"We don't trust the imperials. We are always on guard against being backstabbed out of the blue."
Jessica took out a small blade from seemingly out of nowhere. That looked just like a normal dress, just where was she hiding that?
She pressed that blade onto Regis' neck.
"Answer me Regis d'Auric Did you lie to me?"
"Not at all."

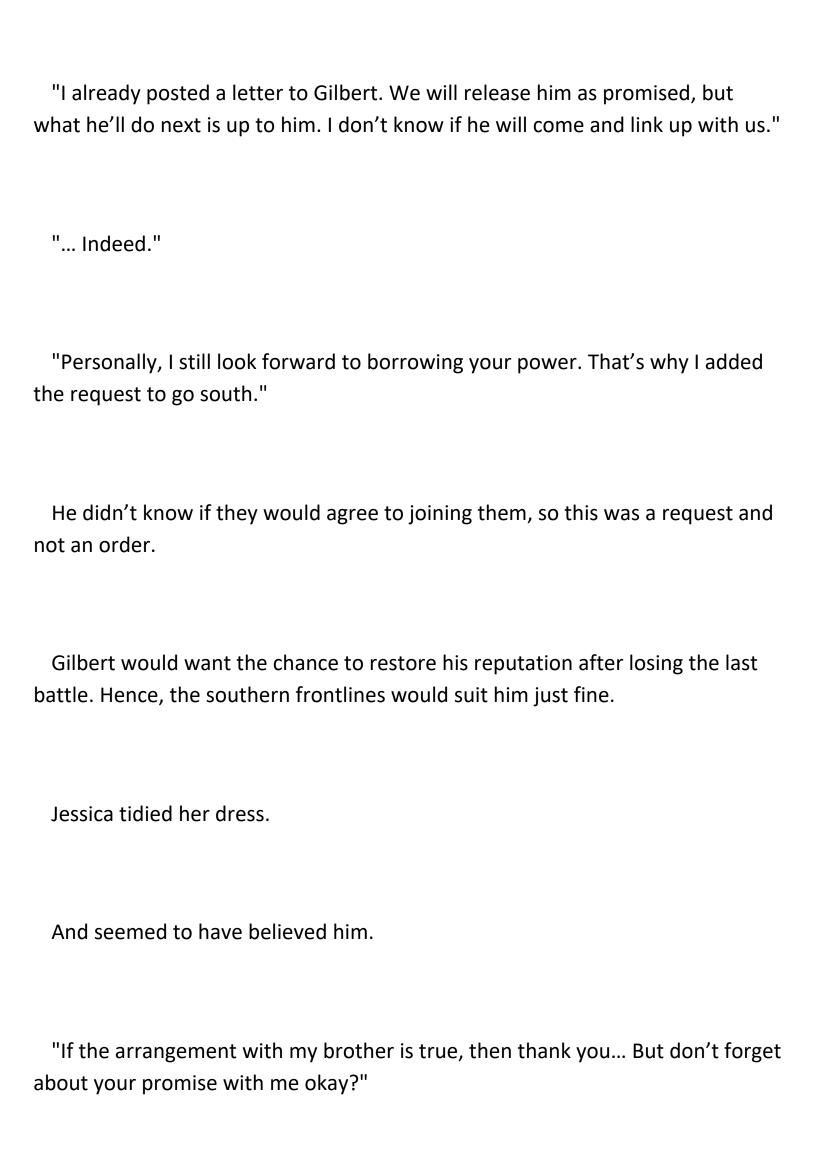


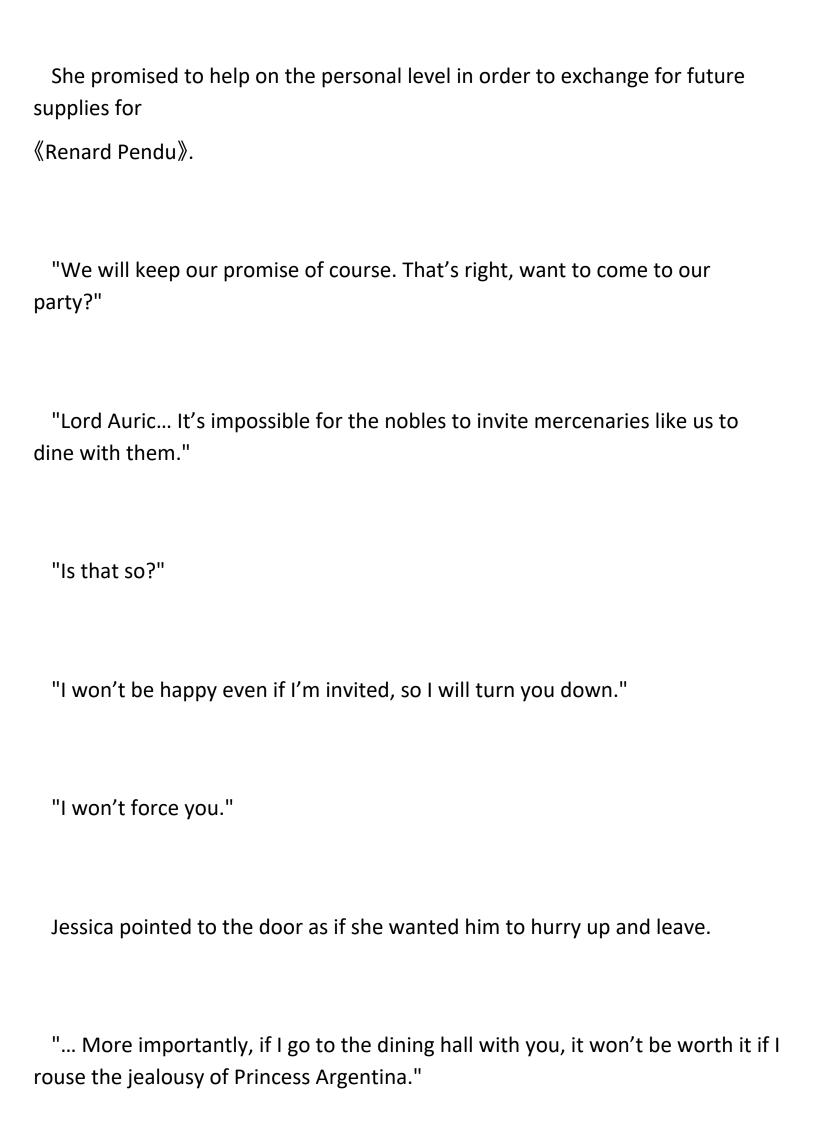
Imperial soldiers would be given remuneration, and when things stabilized, they would be rewarded according to their contributions and maybe receive a promotion.
However, mercenaries work for the sake of remunerations. Normally, they would receive half the money in advance as a deposit.
Regis said troublingly:
" I understand, but it's hard for me to give you a satisfactory payment right now. After all, the Fourth Army don't have enough funds. Although there is a budget set aside for the Généralissime Office, the soonest we can get it will be next month."
"Are you saying we should wait?"
" I can only ask you to believe me, but I'm not just idling around either. I also asked you to go to the south with us."
"And the reason?"



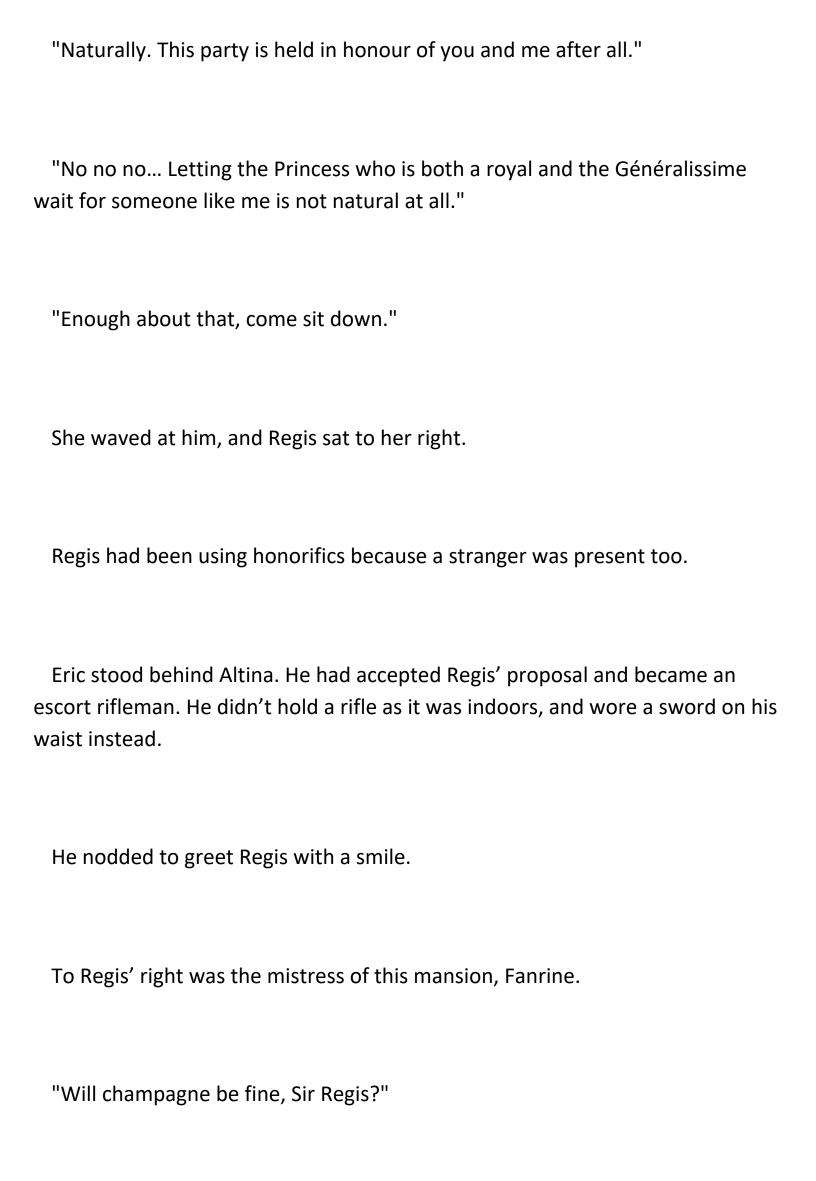


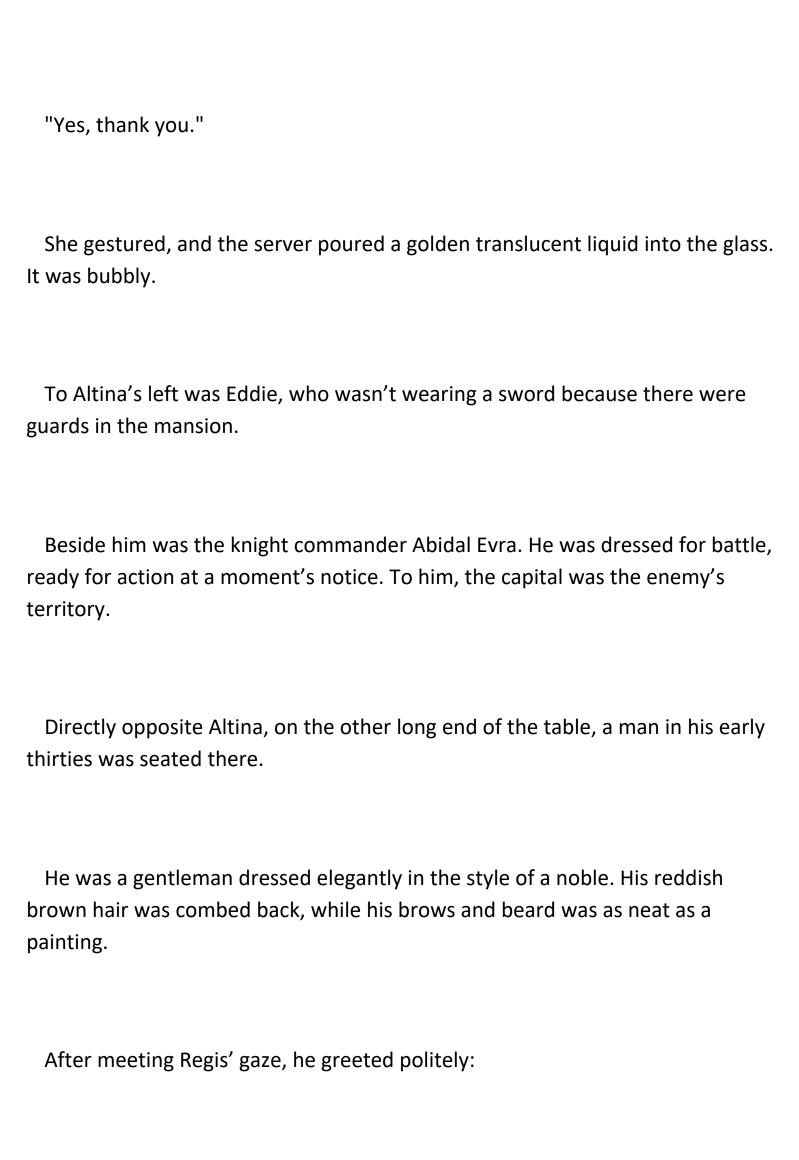


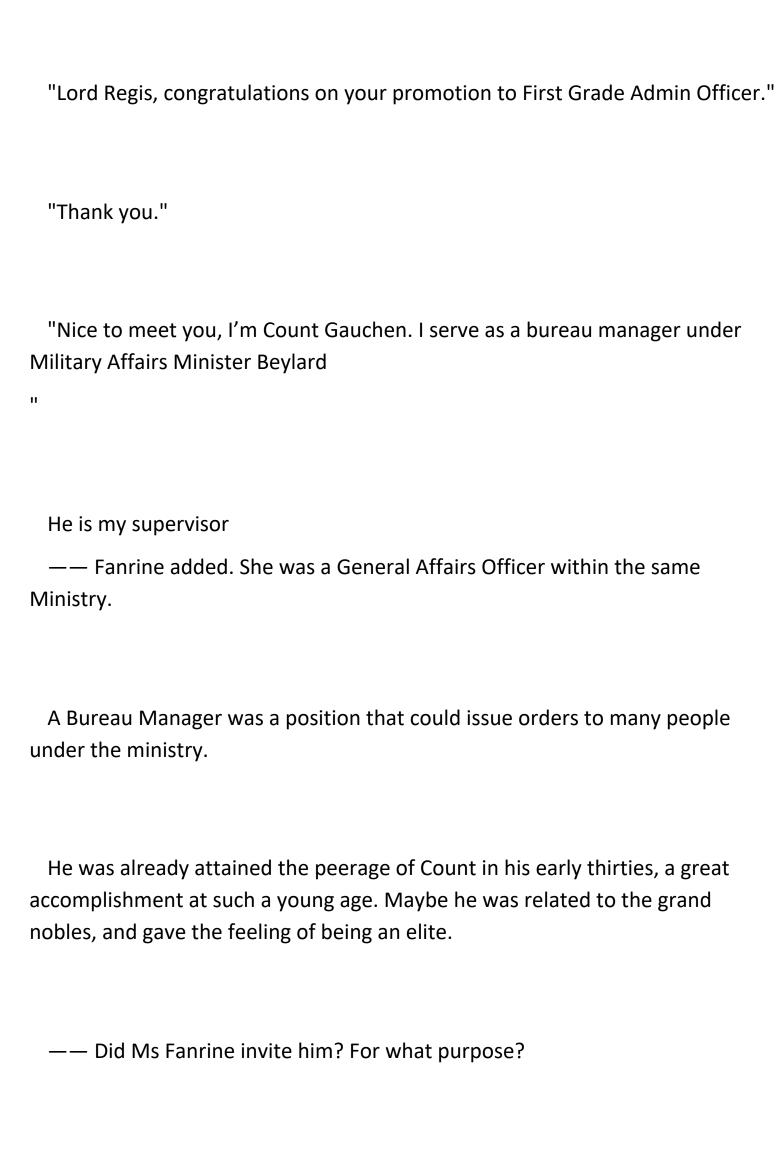


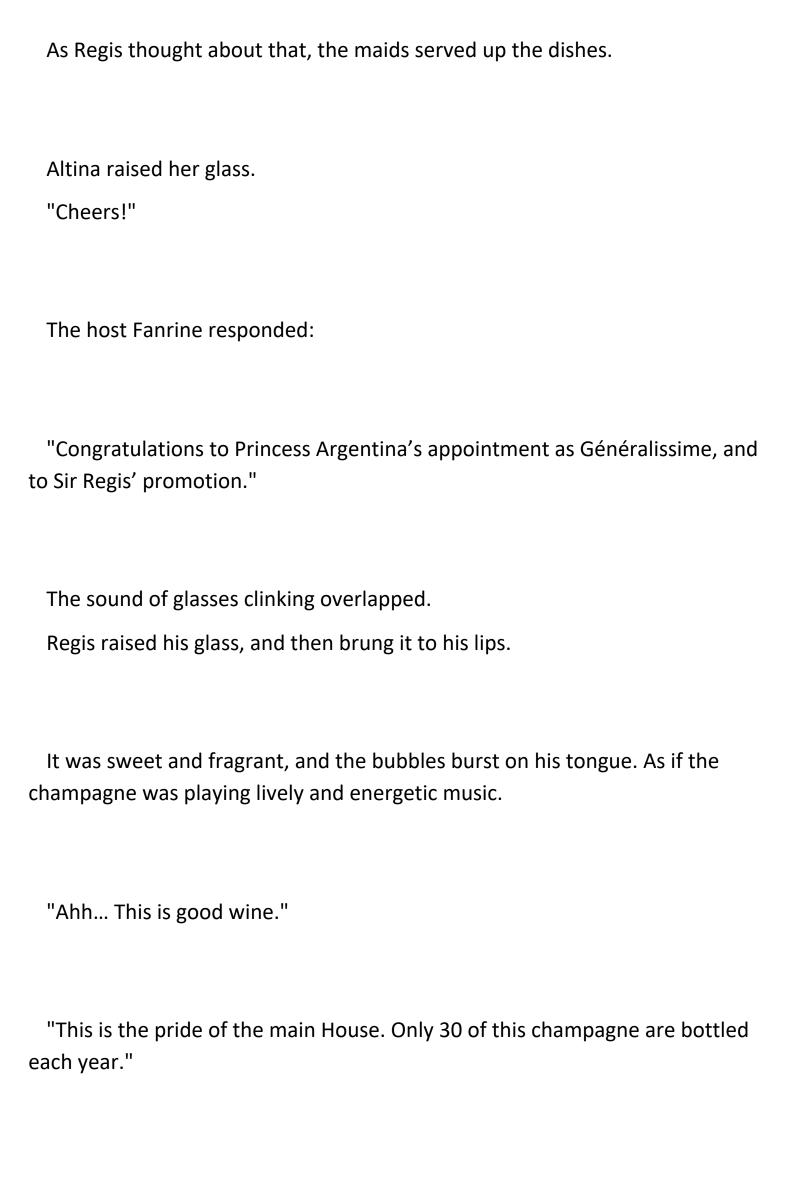


He only left to change clothes, but he took a long time to reach the dining hall.
He entered the dining hall.
In the middle of the wide and extravagant hall was a beige coloured long table. Art pieces adorned the wall, and the servants were lined up there too.
Altina was sat at the farthest end of the table.
He thought they would have started already, but it seemed that the food had not been served yet. There were just bread and glasses on the table.
Altina said:
"You're finally here, Regis!"
"E-Erm Have you all been waiting for me?"

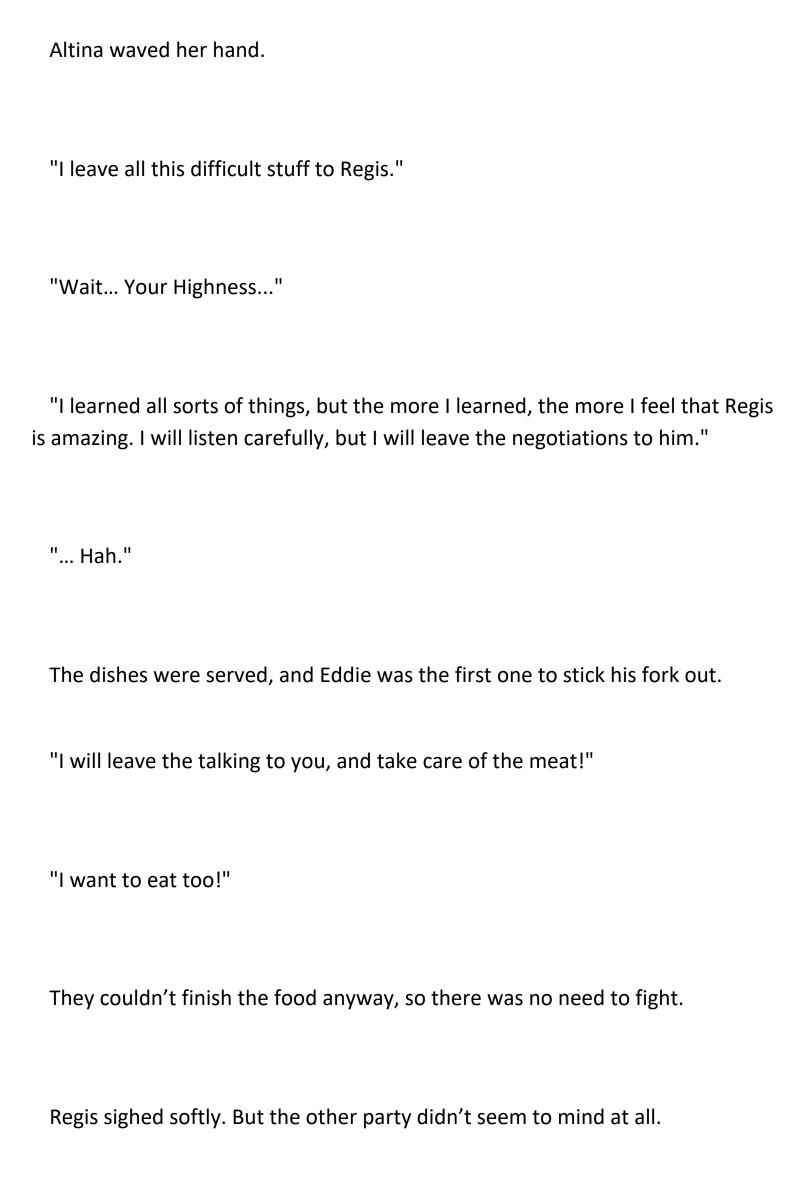












"Probably because Minister Beylard had been transferred to the Ministry of
"But he is actually dissolving it? I thought he would at least leave the name
"He finally made his decision after seeing the huge losses incurred by the Empire."
"And his worries turned true in the war with High Britannia."
"It is gradually lagging behind other nations in both intelligence reports and logistics support, His Majesty Latreille—— Who was the Field Marshal back then had already thought it through carefully."
"That early!?"
"The rumours that he wants to dissolve the organization had leaked long ago Before the passing of the late Emperor."
"Count Gauchen, what will happen to the Ministry of Military Affairs now? Do you know what Prince Latreille intends to do?"



Gauchen laughed disdainfully:
"Even Minister Beclard himself couldn't accept it. Compared to the Ministry of Military Affairs, the authority of the Ministry of Ceremony is too limited. And His Majesty Latreille also expressed his clear intention to cut down on the scale of pompous parades."
"So this is actually a demotion."
"Yes. Other high ranking officials feels the same of course."
"They couldn't accept losing their jobs?"
"They feel that they had been doing the same work as their predecessors, so why are they the only ones who ended up like this? They are furious."
"They don't think they did anything wrong?"
"Yes."

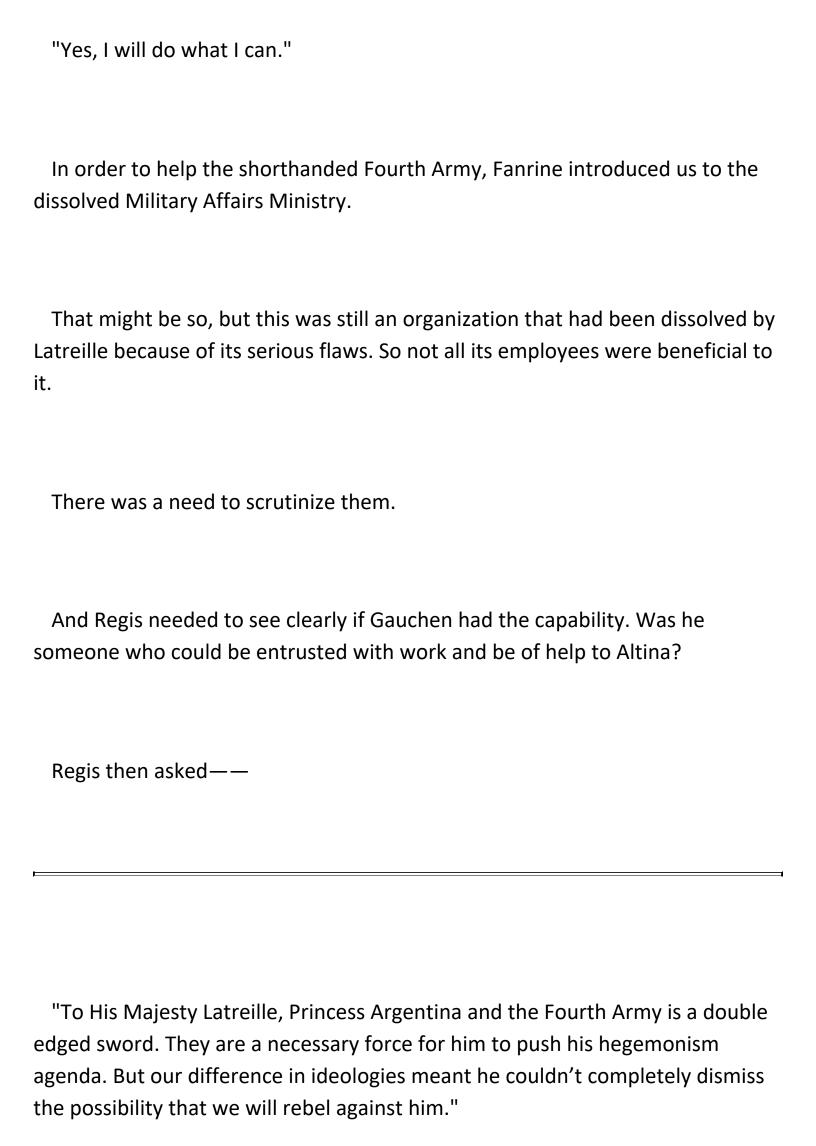
"Hmm—— After all, the Ministry had not made such a big gulf for the past decades."
"Normal people will think that things that had gone on for a century will continue for another century."
"But that isn't applicable now."
"Because of new technology flowing in from the east, new materials could be made and new machines were invented. Both the military and manufacturing industry will be revolutionized. I think we are at a turning point in history."
"I feel the same."
"Lord Auric, what do you think the coming era will be like?"
" His Majesty Latreille will widen the frontlines. At the very least, he will counterattack High Britannia and Langobalt that invaded us within this year. It will be the same for the south."
"We will be attacking huh"

"After the Imperial Army succeeds in mass producing the new rifles and cannons, the way wars are waged will change drastically. If rifles can fire continuously, then a small number of infantry will be able to defeat cavalry."
When the Knight Commander Abidal Evra heard what Regis said, he showed a troubled face.
This will happen in the future, so there is still time to do something about it—— Regis added.
Gauchen tilted his head.
"Will the Belgarian Empire walk down the path of a conqueror?"
"It will be inevitable for a time."
" And after that?"
Regis looked him in the eye.

Where should he begin?
Was he someone trustworthy? Since Fanrine invited him, he was probably not from Latreille's faction
Altina said as she chewed on her meat.
"If I thought he could succeed, I wouldn't have competed with him for the throne!"
She spoke her mind.
Regis said with a sigh.
Regis sala with a sign.
"Well That's how it is. The future I want to see is slightly different from the
ideals of the Emperor."
He still couldn't utter the words "The Imperial Army will lose".
Gauchen nodded.







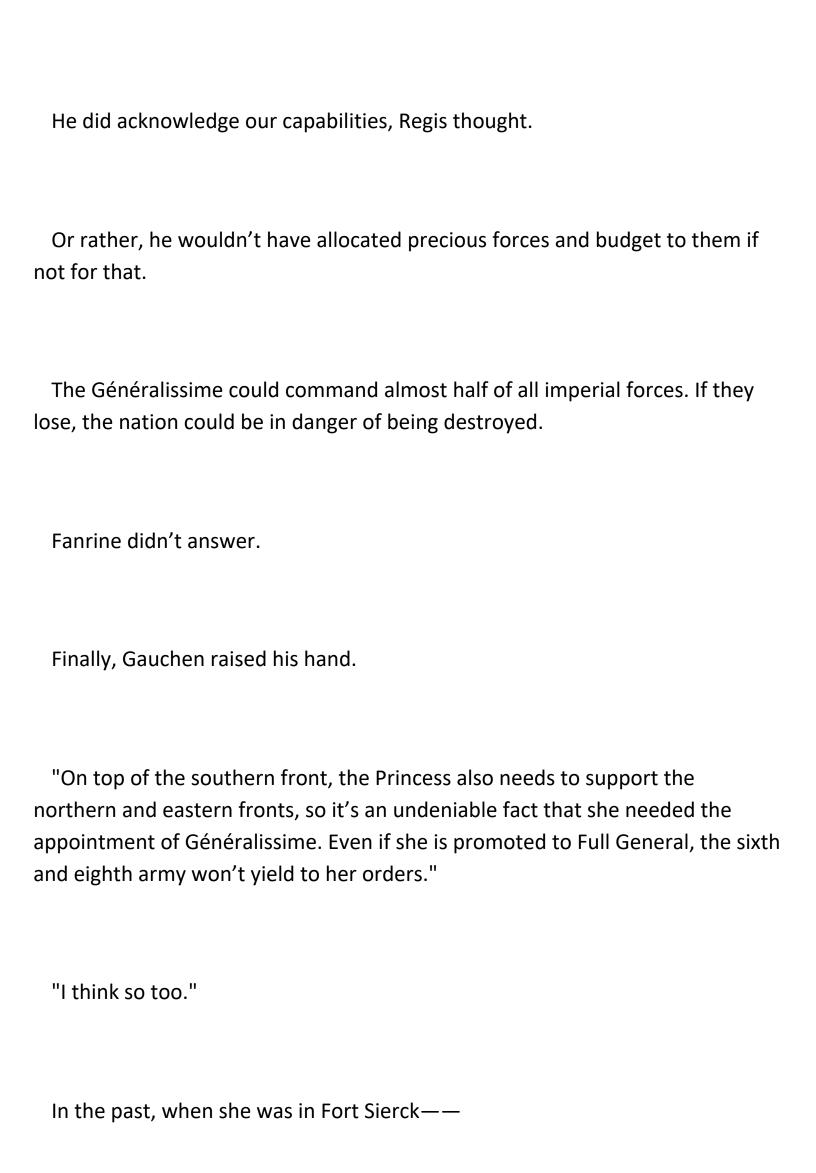
And of course, we have no intention of doing so now —— Regis concluded.
Altina added:
"I just want to end all wars in this world, not defeat Latreille or start a civil war."
"That might be so, but he will definitely see us as famished hunting dogs. A civil war almost erupted a few days ago after all."
"It's his fault for sending that rubbish report!"
"That's a bit far-fetched."
In the end, in the last letter Latreille sent in his capacity as a Field Marshal, he apologized for the mistake. Since he became the Emperor, all that was now moot.
Regis continued:



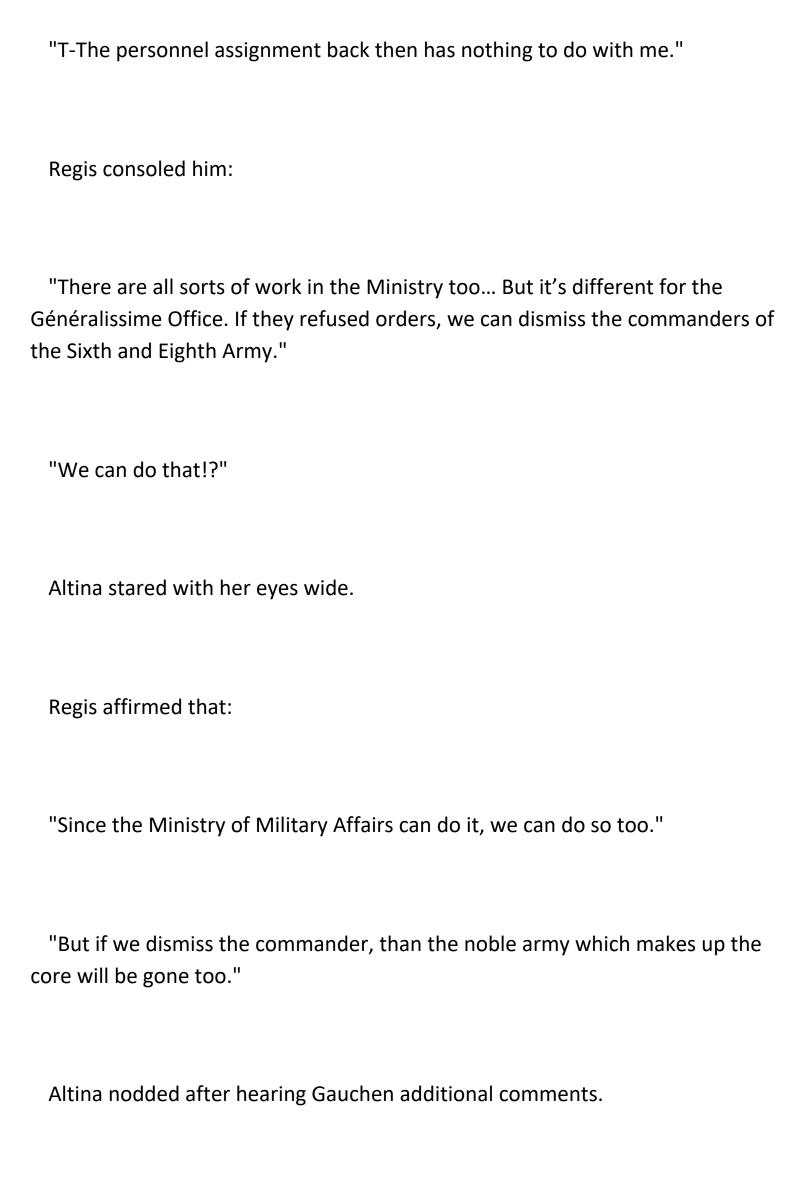


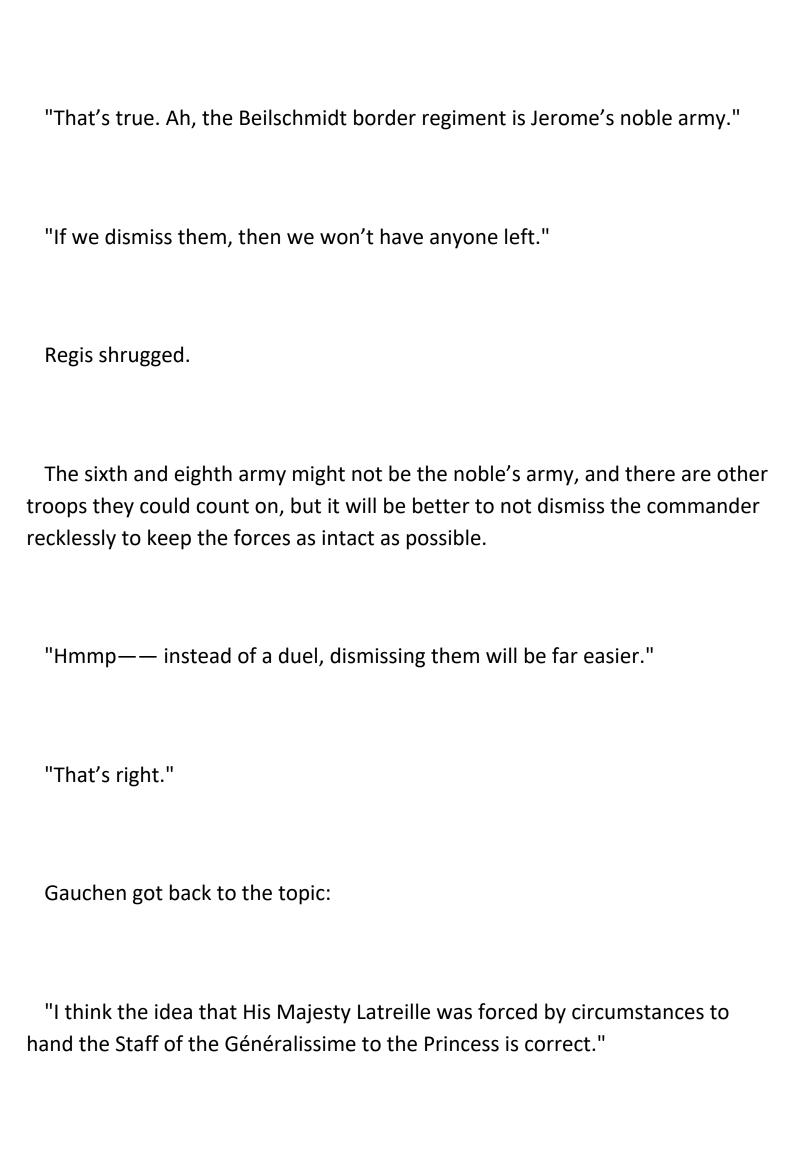
"I think it's because he concluded that Sir strategist is a dangerous opponent, and decided to prevent any revolt by improving your treatment."
"Appeasement huh. As a ruler, improving remuneration to raise the loyalty of one's subjects is an adequate strategy. But raising the white flag for just one of his subject and diverting from his path of a conqueror seems unlikely. His Majesty is a great person with an unyielding spirit."
"Oh I see. It's hard to imagine him trying to get on the Princess' good side."
Next was Eddie.
"I think he was forced by the circumstances? He left the north, south and east fronts to the Fourth Army, while he only defends the capital. And you said he plans to attack High Britannia or Langobalt right? If the Military Affairs Ministry can't be counted on, he will have to concede that the Généralissime Office is needed."
" Because his plan to weaken us failed, so he changed his strategy and decided to use us as pawns instead. Since he will be using us, a more powerful pawn will be better right?"

"That's right."
"Not a bad idea. But he can't dismiss the possibility that the Fourth Army will turn around and attack the capital in rebellion instead. How should he deal with that then?"
"Hmm Well, then he can just cut down those who rebel."
"Then he need to be ready for a civil war. That's a bit of a stretch, but I think it's really close."
Altina stood up.
"I won't start a civil war! I absolutely won't start one!"
" Of course. I'm just trying to analyze what His Majesty Latreille is thinking."
"He is always toying with me. Every time! No matter how many troops he gives me, he still think I can't win!"
"No no"



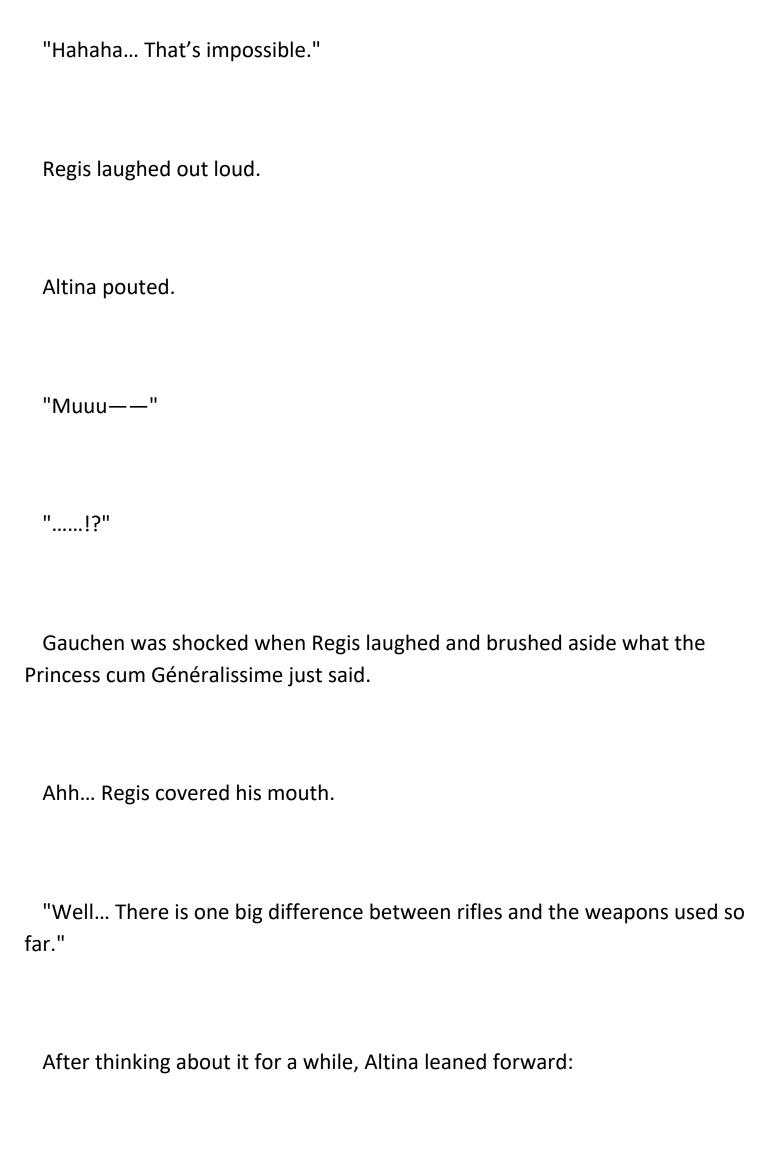
The newly appointed Major General Altina took over the role of commande from the Black Knight, Brigadier General Jerome.
Even though she outranked him in the Ministry's orders, her peerage and military rank
The soldiers wouldn't obey her command.
The same thing would happen if the Fourth Army heads to the south. There wasn't time for a duel this time.
Altina clenched her fists when she heard what Regis said.
She was still smiling, but she had an aura of intense rage.
"Hmmp so the people in the Ministry already knew that Jerome wouldn't listen to my orders Can I punch him?"
Gauchen leaned back.

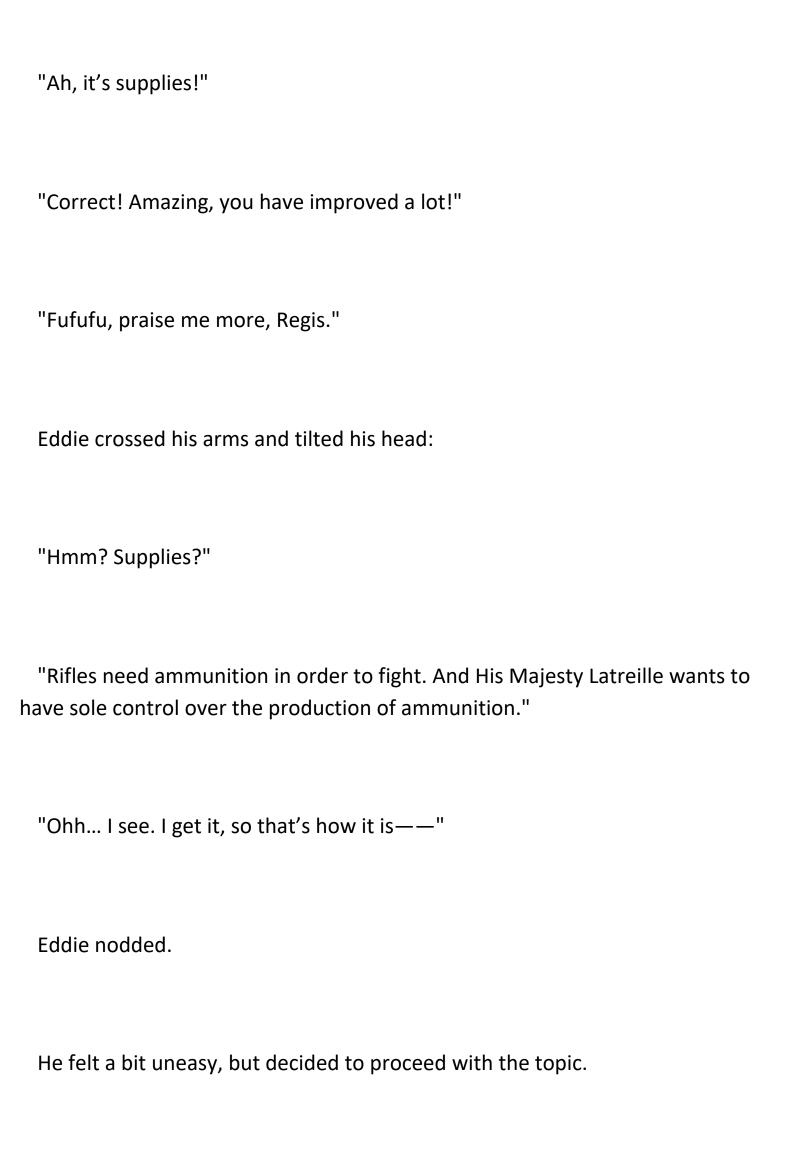




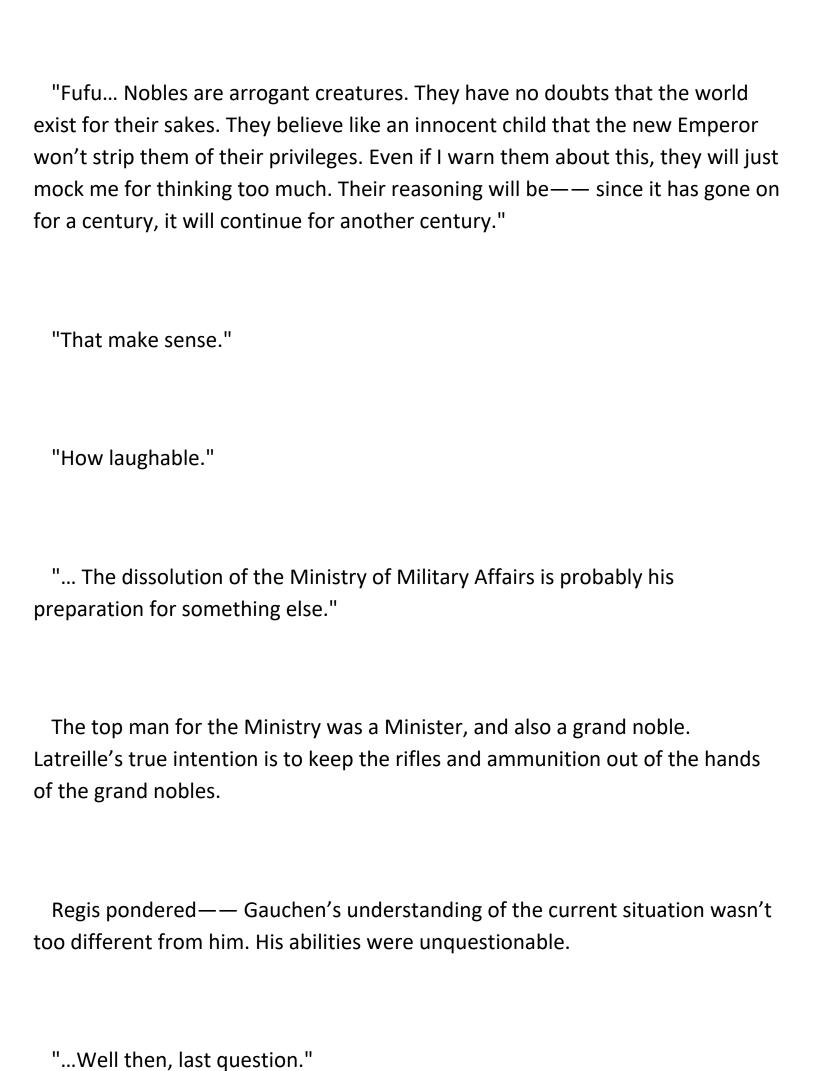


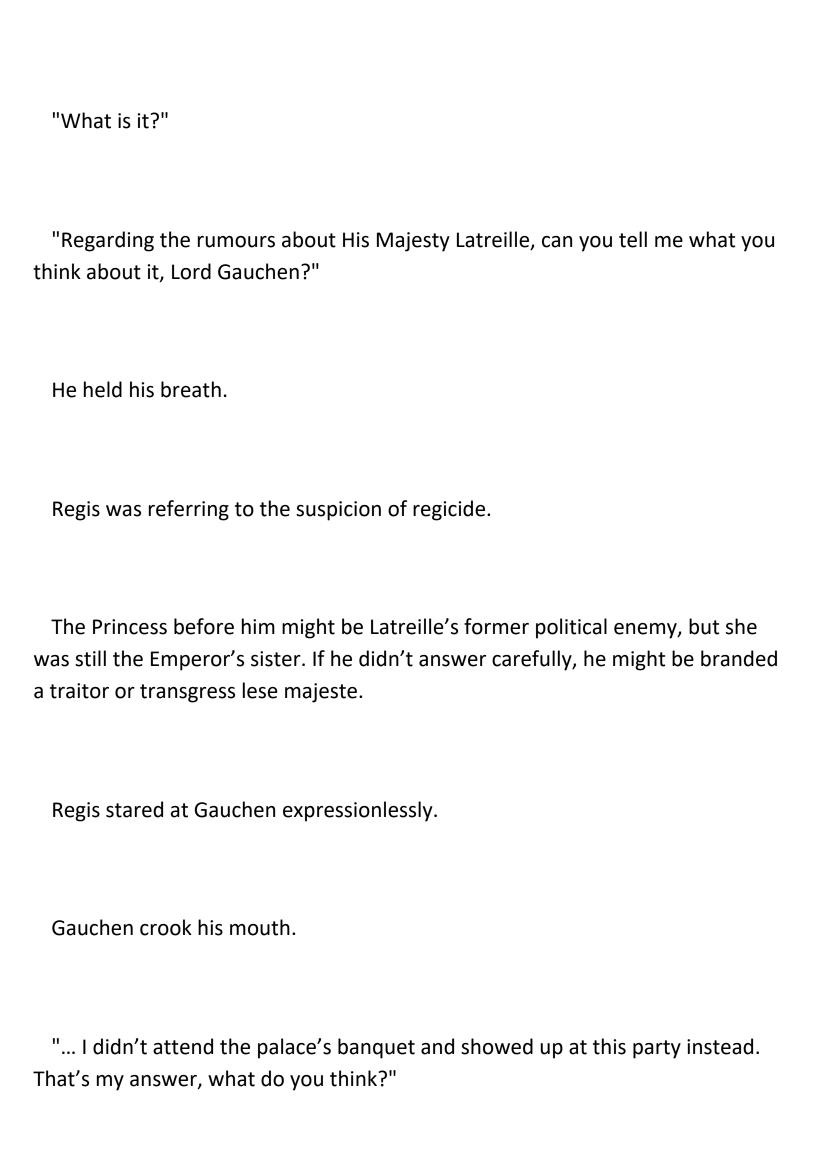






"His Majesty Latreille is preventing any uprising by using the fact that 'it is impossible to start a war if one can't obtain guns and ammunition'. And he has even gone one step further."
After this would be $$ the dissolution of noble armies and nationalizing the armed forces.
Regis shrugged.
"As for the Staff of the Généralissime, he will be taking it back later, so he generously handed it to you for now."
That's how he actually thinks!? Altina puffed out her cheeks.
Gauchen sighed and said:
" No one in the Ministry or the aristocrats understand the situation to such an extent. As expected of you."
"Lord Gauchen already realized this too. Have you told the other nobles about this?"





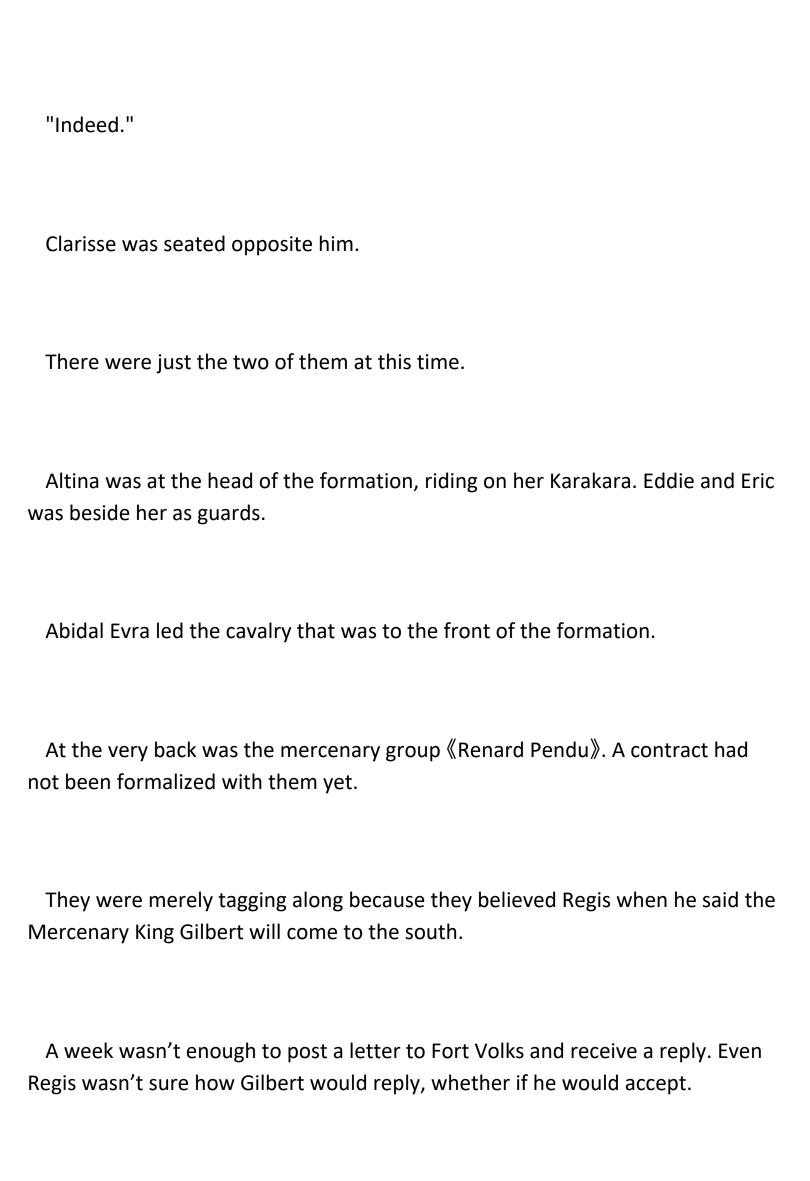


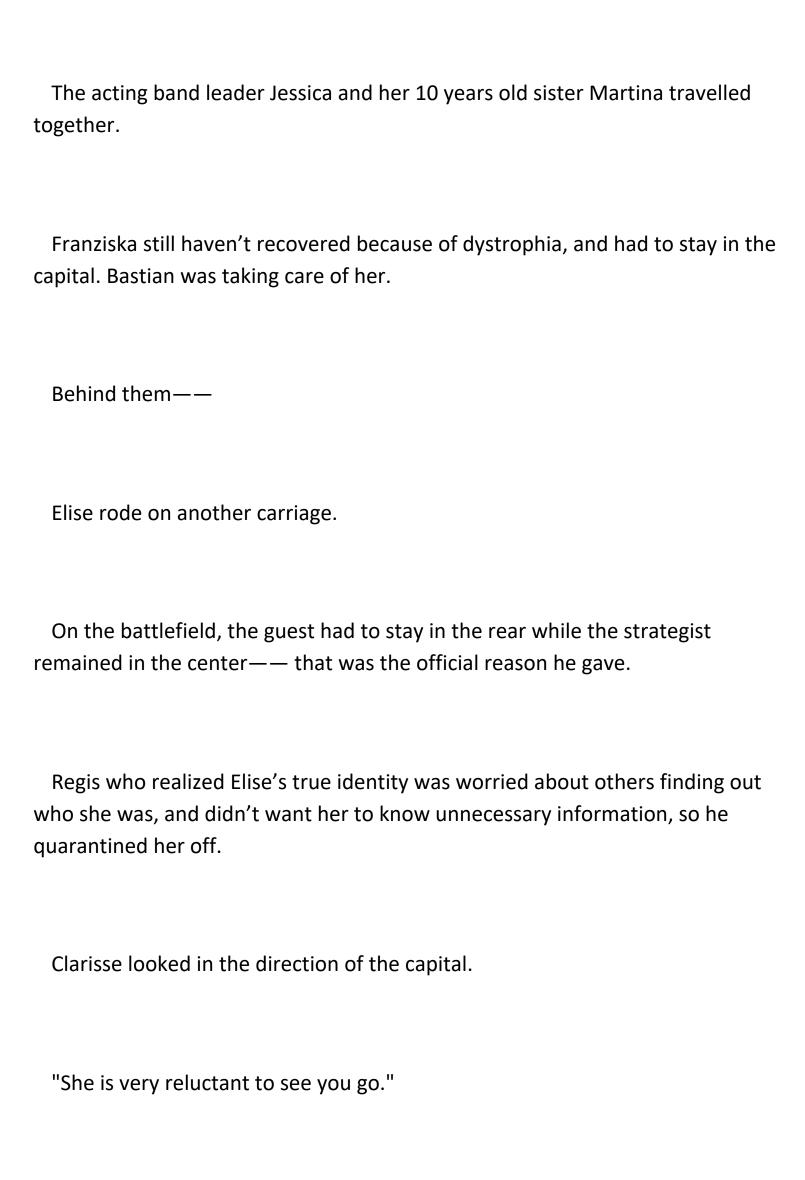
"... By the way, I forgot to mention the work conditions. Lord Gauchen, I have never taken a day off ever since I was assigned to this unit. Will you be fine with that?"

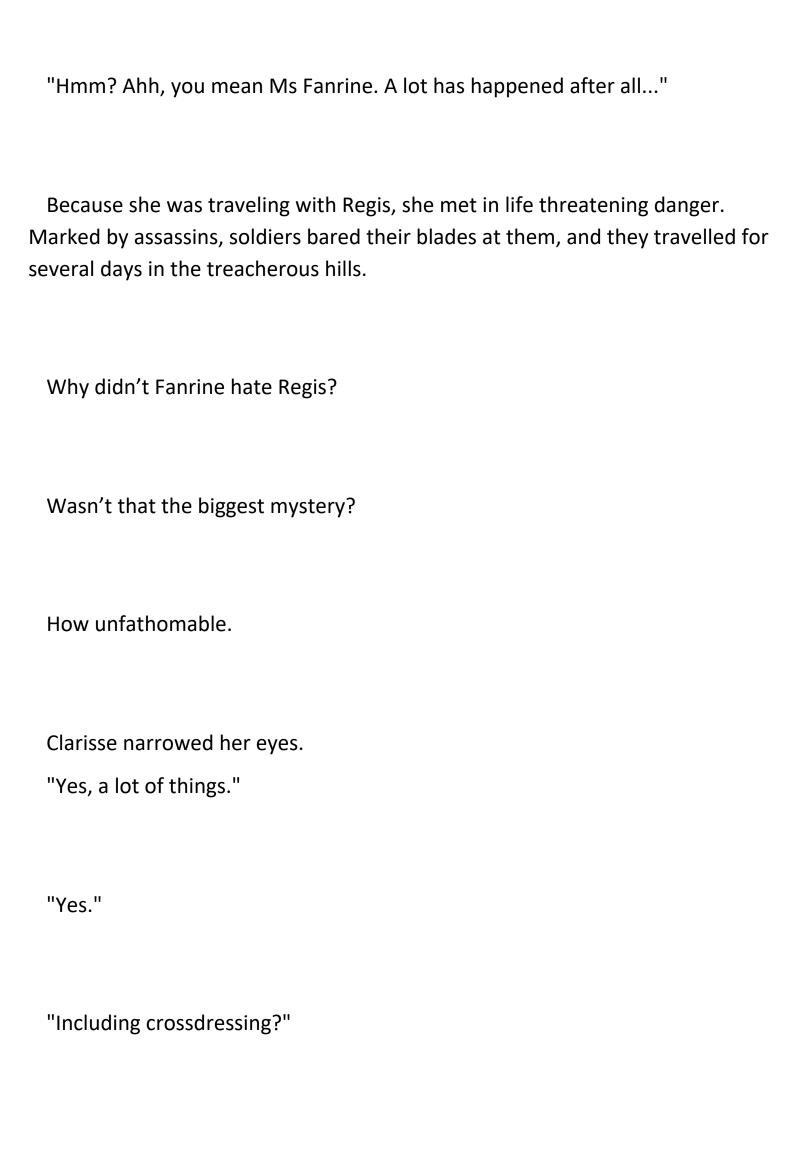
"Eh!?"

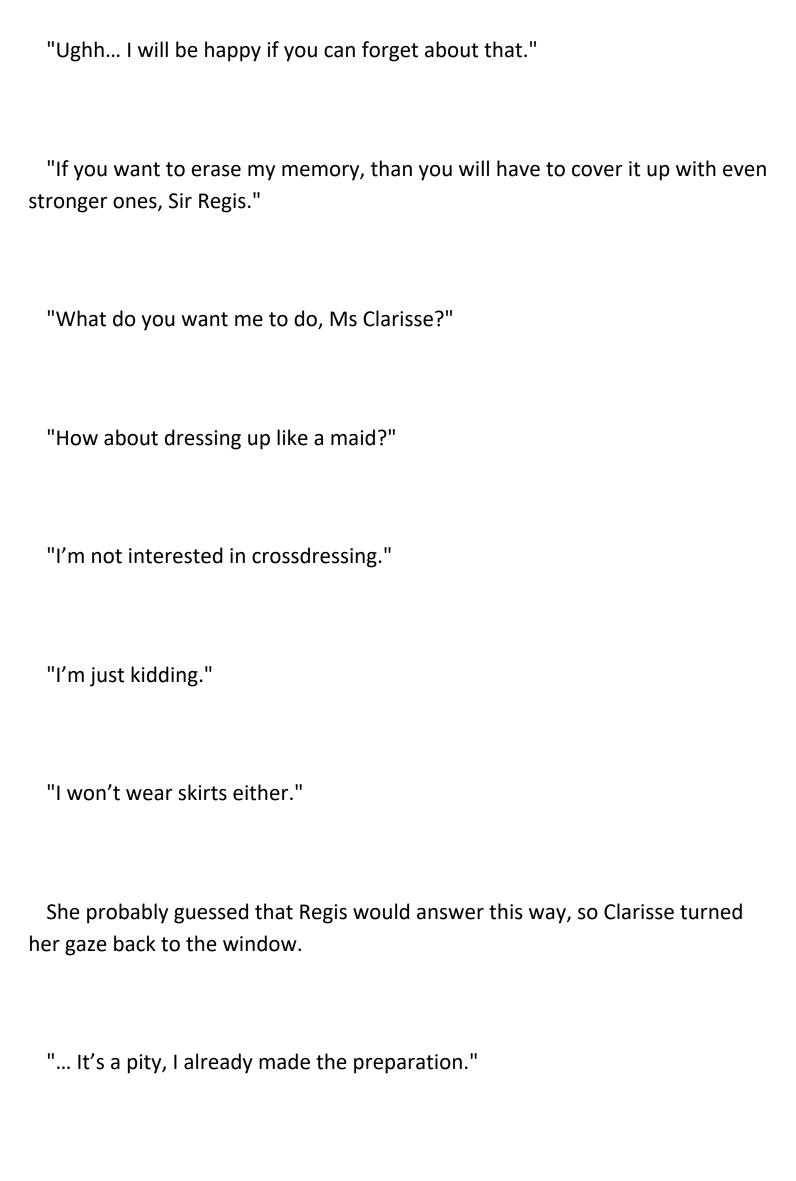
Chapter 4: Heading to the South

One week later——
Imperial Year 851, August 20th.
The Fourth Army led by Généralissime Marie Quatre Argentina de Belgaria se off from the Imperial Capital Versailles.
They were about 8,000 strong.
On top of the 500 cavalry and 4,000 infantry from Fort Volks, they were joined by 2,000 mercenaries and 1,500 regular soldiers hailing from the south.
The long lines of soldiers marched along the road.
Regis was seated inside a white carriage.
" It has been a while."









"You've already made preparation!?"

He finally noticed that on the roof of the white carriage where Altina's personal belongings were stored, there was something else stashed there.

"A-Anyway... It's great that Ms Fanrine joined the Généralissime Office. She is capable and has a wide social network."

The Généralissime Office staff stayed in the capital for the mean time. After all, be it personnel, supplies or intel, all these would be centered around the capital.

The building within the palace where the Ministry of Military Affairs was using had been occupied by admin officers from Latreille's First Army.

The Généralissime Office suddenly lost its base of operations... Right after this issue popped up, Gauchen found a mansion owned by a noble whose House was on the decline.

The Fourth Army's administrative that would turn into chaos without Regis could finally operate normally.

They have hired about 150 ex-officers from the old Military Affairs Ministry. Most of them were commoners or nobles who weren't the first born, and all of them were young.

As the Ministry of Military Affairs had more than 2,000 staff, this number seemed really low. But since Gauchen said that this would be enough, he would leave it to him for now.

Regis also needed to learn how to utilize his subordinates.

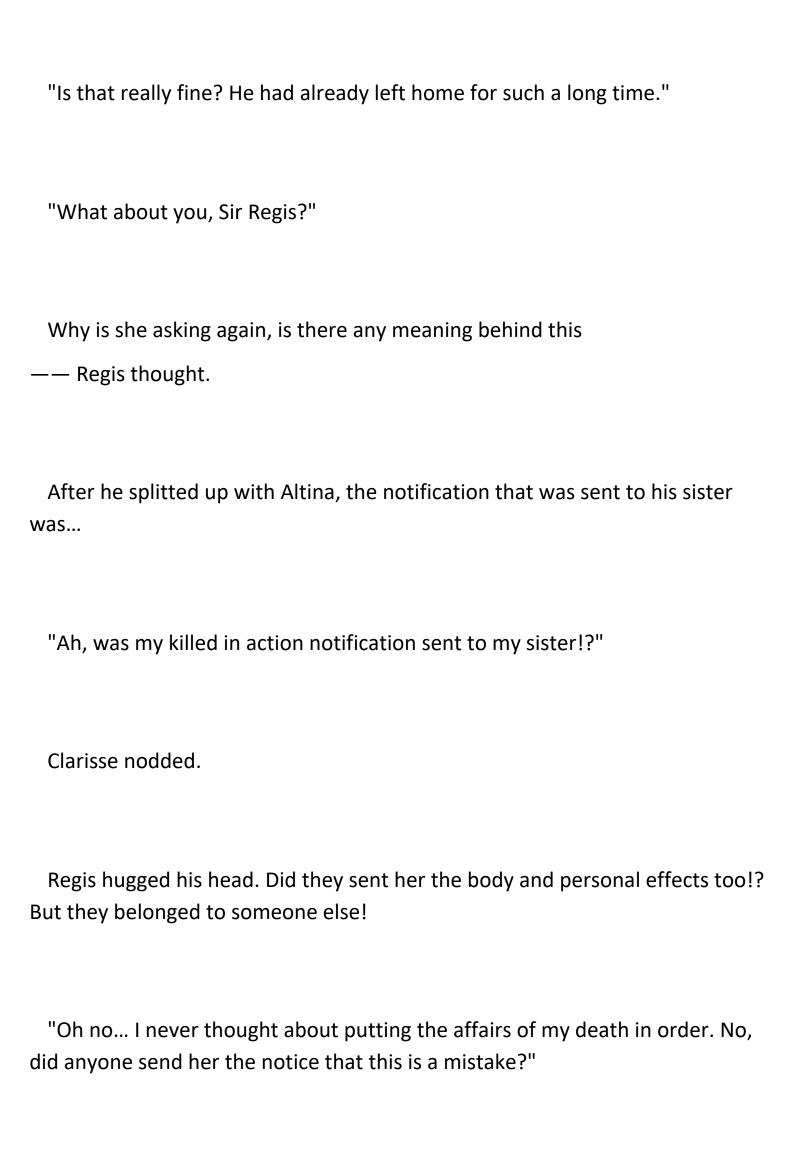
He was a First Grade Admin Officer in the Imperial Empire, but he didn't have any direct subordinates. Only retired officers and Regis was like this.

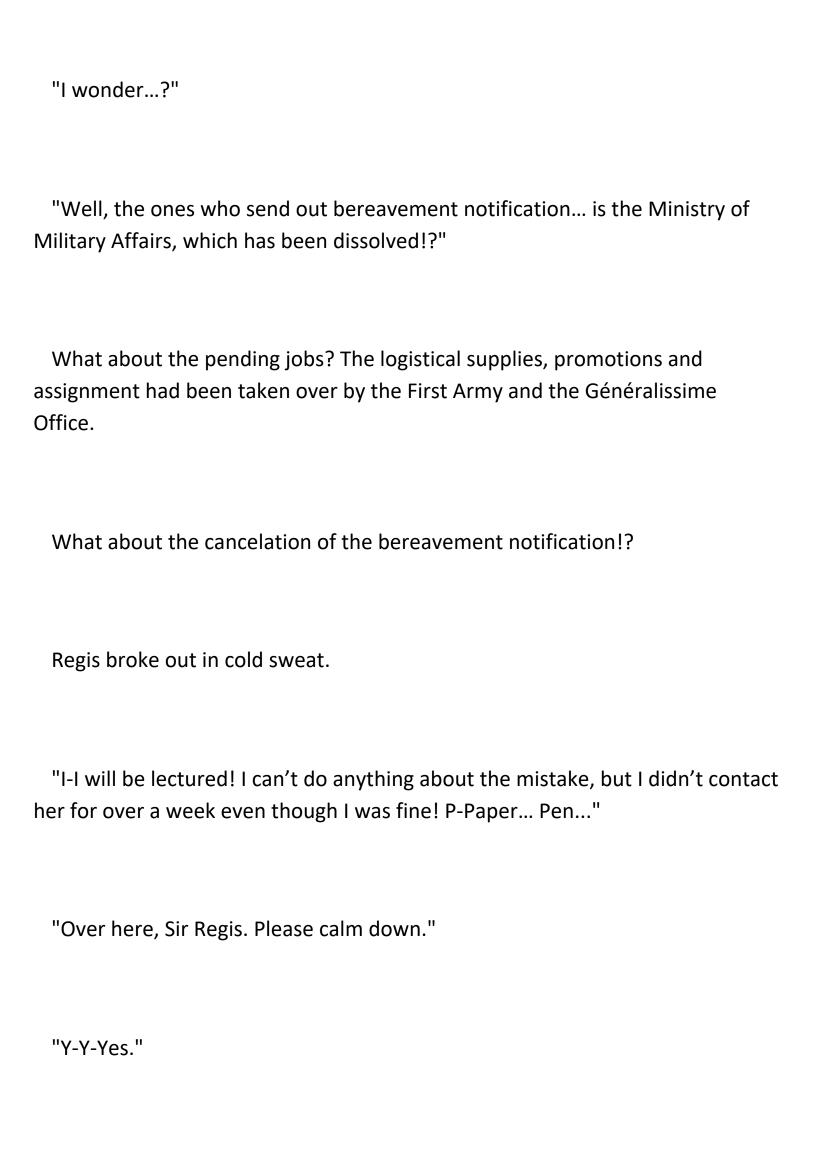
Clarisse returned her gaze back to Regis.

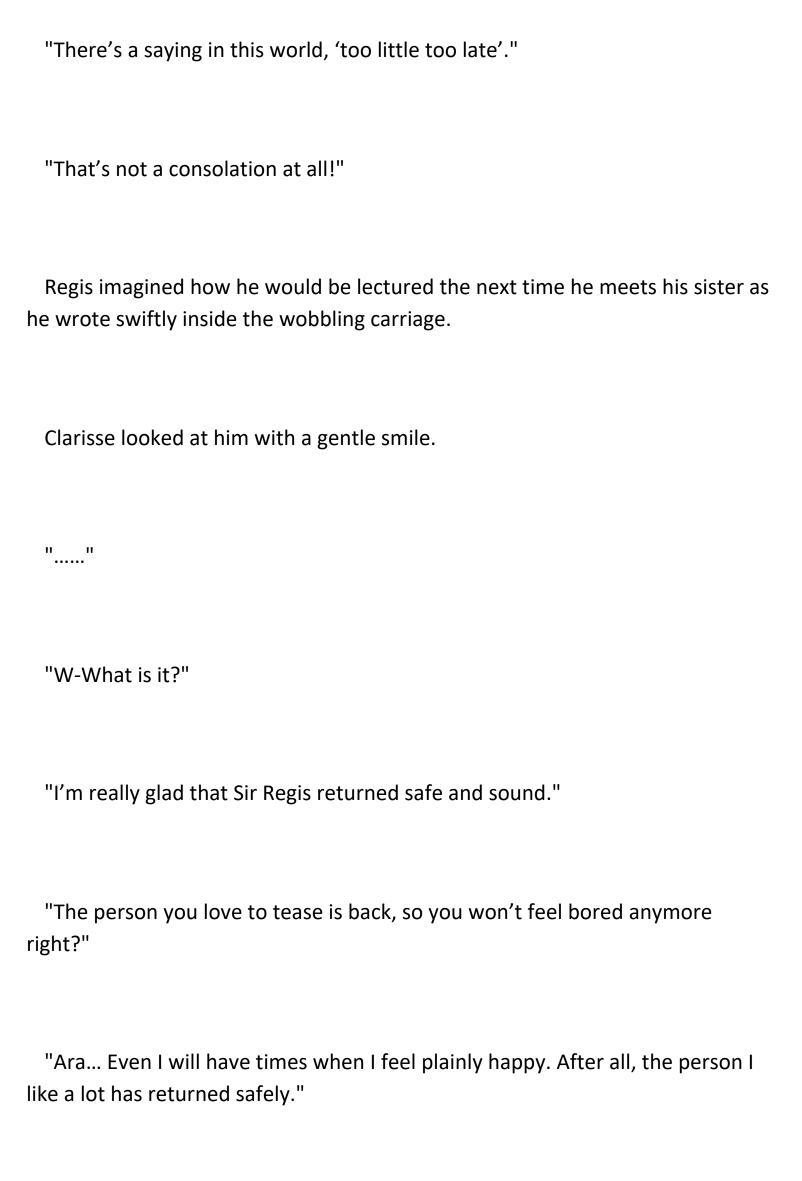
"By the way... have you sent a letter to your family?"

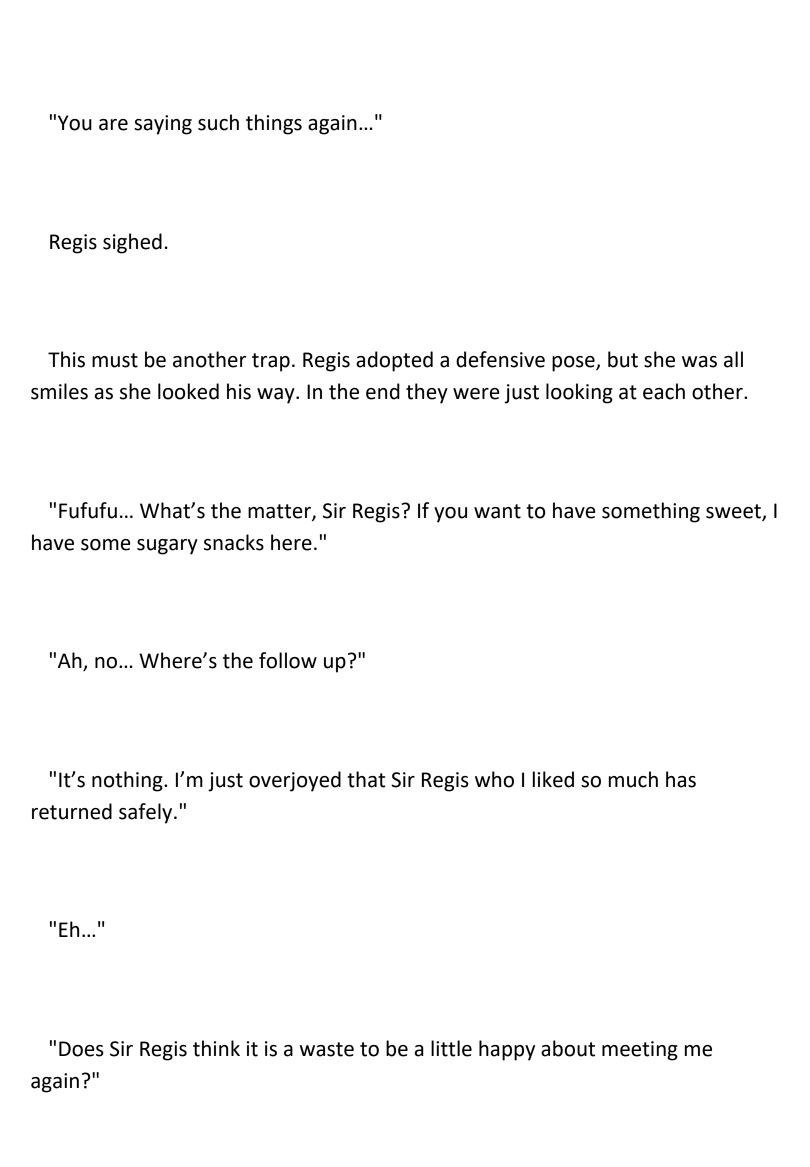
"It should be fine right? Speaking of which, have my brother-in-law Enzo went home yet?"

"No, he's still in Fort Volks... At least he was when we set off."

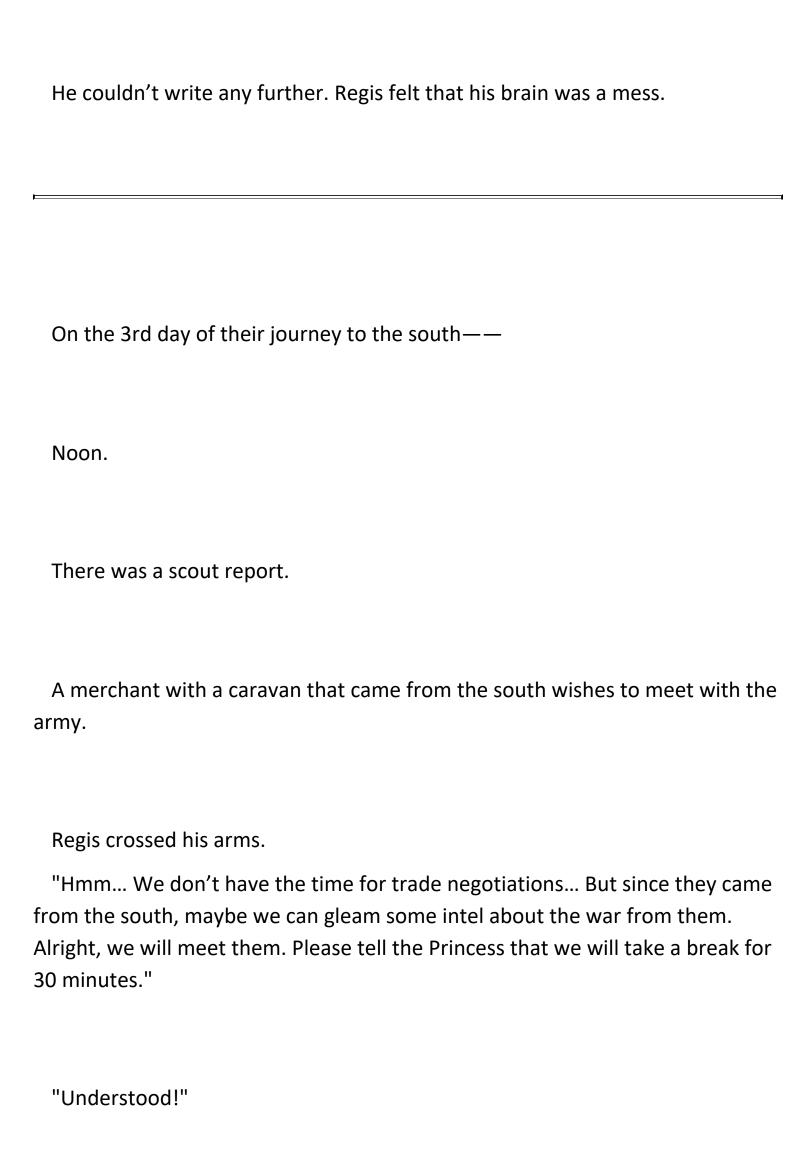












After that, the mer	chant sent a messa	ge that they wish	to visit the
headquarters.			

The messenger saluted.

It seems like the other party just wanted to meet with Regis.

Even if it was a business negotiation, Altina will just tell Regis "I will leave it to you", and she was already tired from the march.

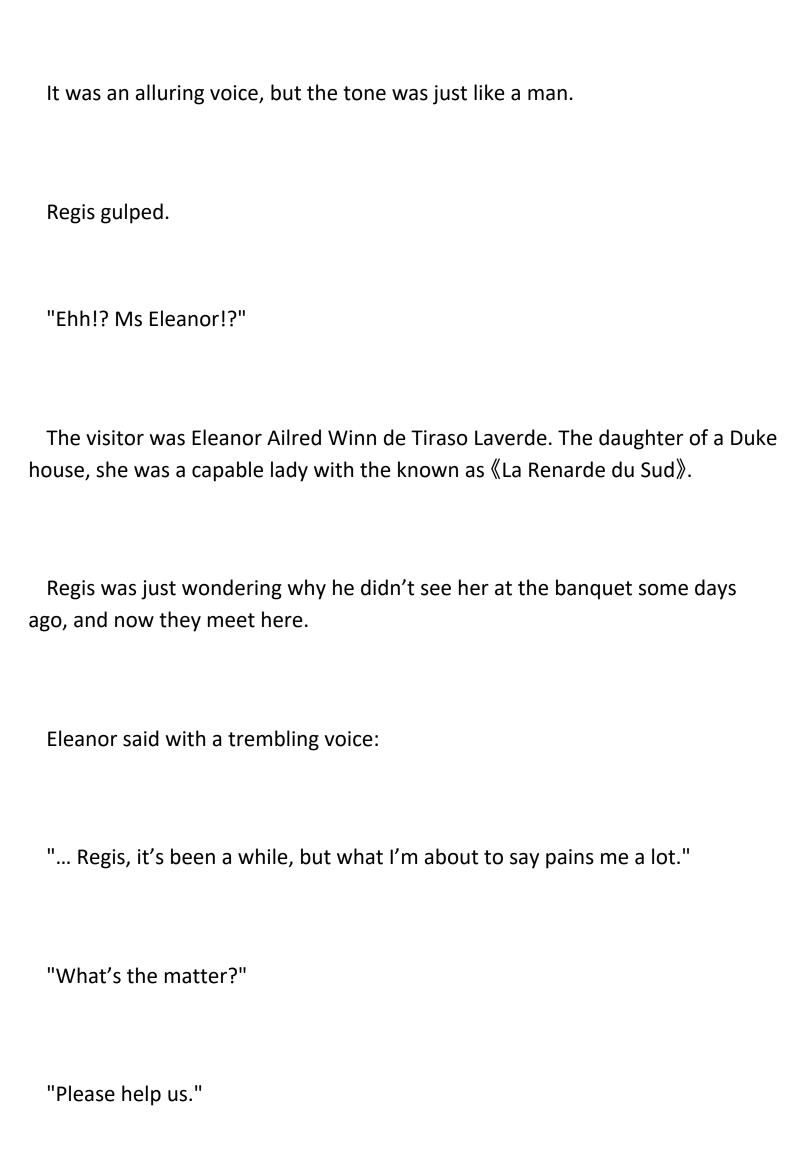
After a short wait, a lady walked forth from the midst of the troops.

Her hair that was as black as ink was draped over her black dress. Regis thought it would be a man since the visitor was a merchant, and didn't expect such a young lady.

A young girl in a white dress followed behind her. She had a laced parasol in her hands to keep the bright sun from harming the lady's skin. Since she wasn't dressed like a maid, then that young girl was probably a servant.

The thing about her that was most unlike a merchant was her lack of any luggage.
The impression she gave was of an aristocratic lady out on a stroll. Why did the scouts report say that she was a merchant from a caravan?
She pulled aside the veil before her face, and her eyes as dark as obsidian looked Regis' way.
"Seems like you're still alive, Regis?"





Side Story: The Black Knight and the Abandoned Fort

Jerome Jean de Beilschmidt had black hair and eyes, rode on a dark horse with dark armour and had never lost a battle before.

He obtained the title of 《Black Knight》 because of his appearance and capabilities, his name was enough to strike fear into both friend and foe.

Imperial year 851 July 1st——

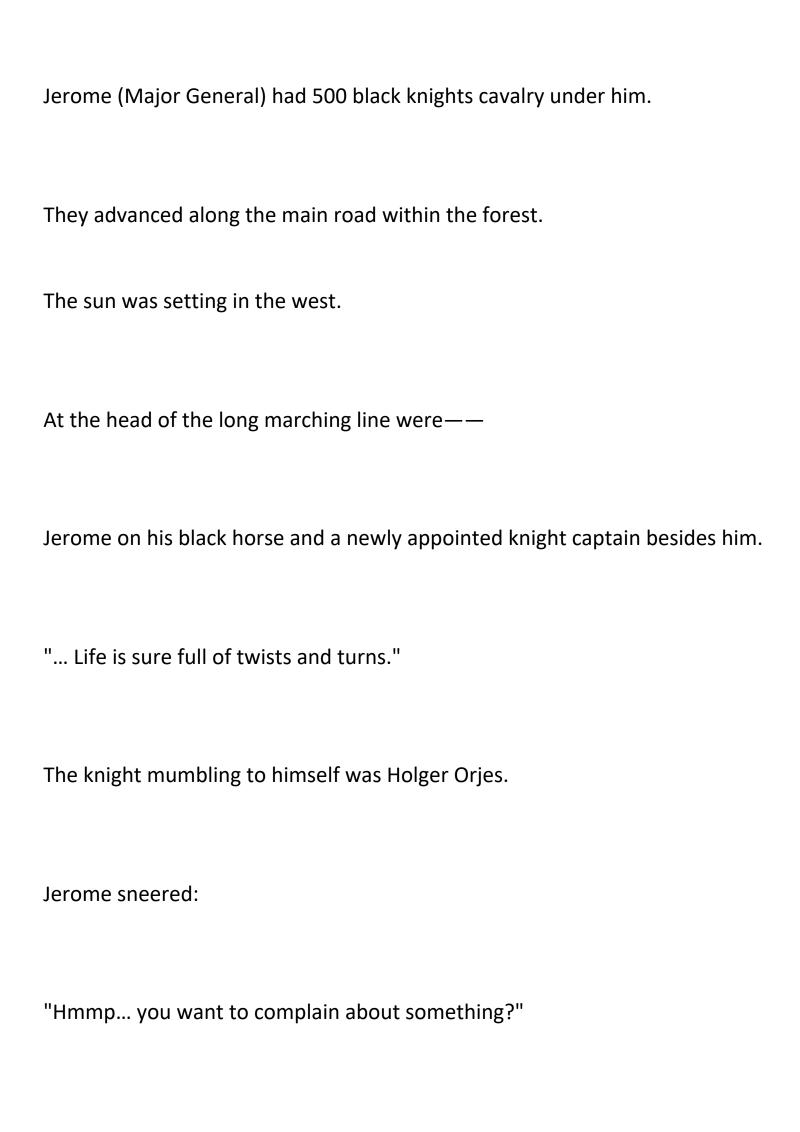
A detachment from the fourth army and the seventh army formed a mixed unit, and was despatched to the eastern front.

They numbered 13,000 in total.

The number was a bit low for the main forces holding up the eastern front, but it was a huge number for one army.

Specifically speaking, Coignieres (Brigadier General) commands 8,000 men of the Seventh Army.

Benjamin (Lieutenant General) leads 4,500 remnants of the Second Army.







"After all, I saw for myself the battle between the Imperial First Army and High Britannia. Thank god I'm blessed with good luck. Who would have guess they would be burned alive in a swamp doused with oil, getting blown up by a ship of explosives, or getting charged by cavalry while blinded by thick fog."

There were countless enemy soldiers who lost their lives to Regis' schemes.

"I'm very unhappy about that. Thrusting your lance through a powerful foe is a real battle. Using schemes like Regis would be just like a con artist."

"Haha... No matter what, I had a hard life. I'm a knight from a fallen nation after all."

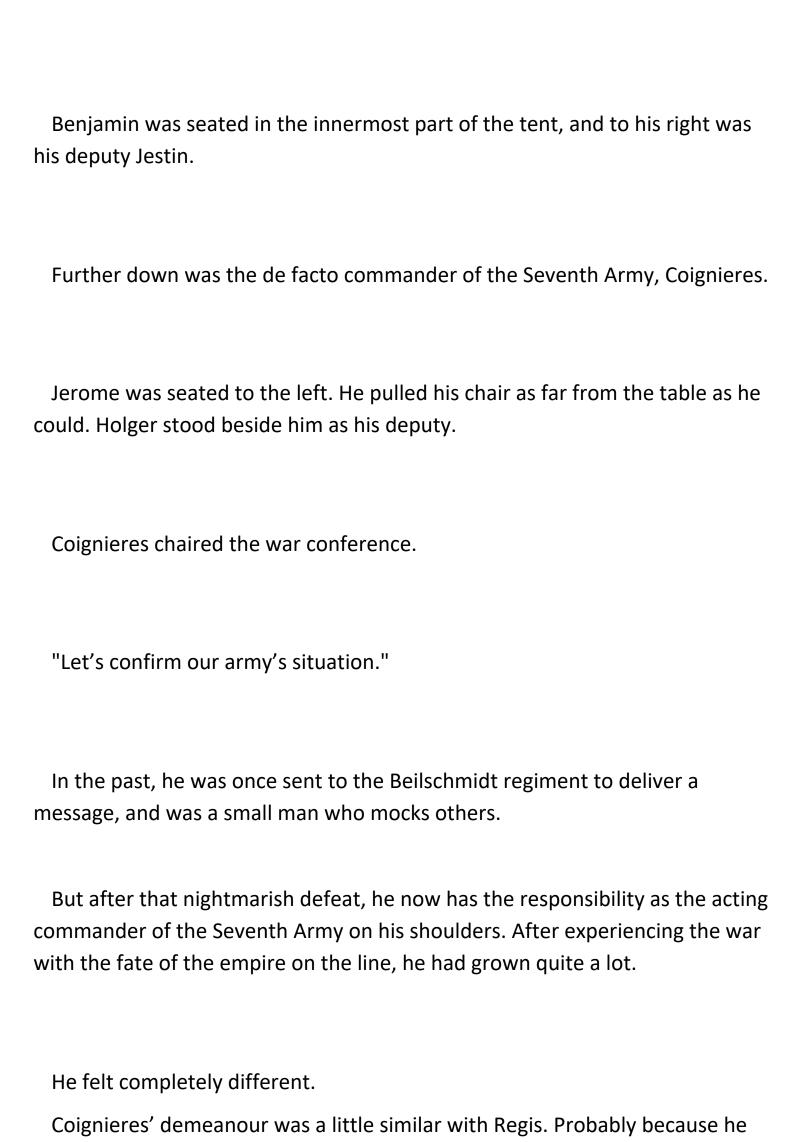
Holger was born to a knight house, but he lost his home nation to a civil war in the Germanian Federation, and ended up as a mercenary.

He received training on leading troops in the past, so he had the ability to command men.

And his turbulent experience as a mercenary made him more experienced than a regular from the imperial army, which also made him more cool headed and calm during emergencies.

Jerome couldn't bring himself to compliment others
But he knew the importance of talented men. Holger's hard life could be considered a blessing to his unit too.
He pointed ahead.
"Lord Jerome, there's a city ahead."
"Yeah"
"That is the fortress city Marschted. The headquarters of the eastern front."
It was a beautiful city fort surrounded by wheat fields.
As the fort was built with white boulders found in this land, the city walls and the buildings were all white.





respected Regis as the saviour of the nation. Be it his preparation of the information ahead of time or his other actions, all this reminded others of Regis.

"The Seventh Army left 5,000 men behind to hold the fort. 2,000 of them are in this city... The remaining 3,000 are assigned to defend other strongholds. Our combined army of 13,000 are now here to reinforce them. When the Seventh Army set off for the campaign, we have 21,000 men, even though we suffer heavy losses... I'm confident that we have enough soldiers to defend the eastern front. The Seventh Army's 8,000 infantry, Lord Benjamin's former Second Army of 4,500——"

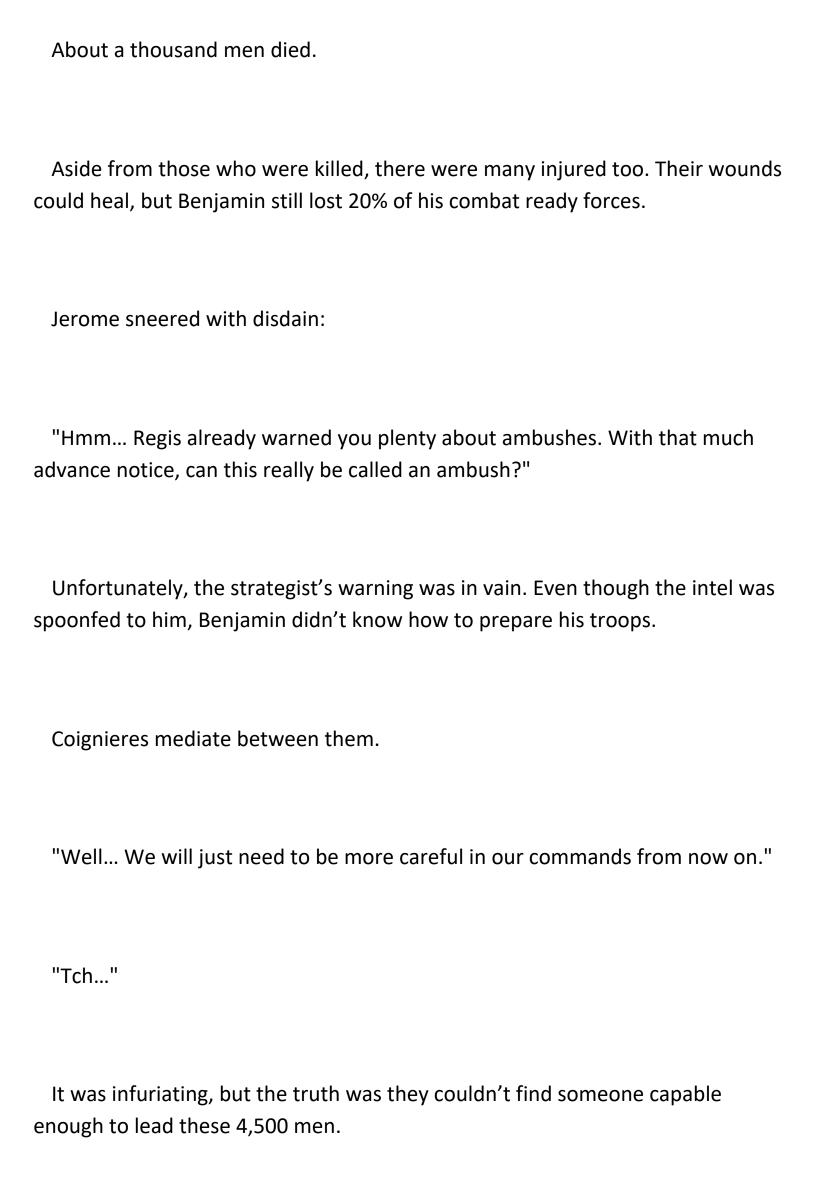
Jerome cut in:

"You lost men again, retard."

Benjamin wiped the sweat from his brow with a handkerchief.

"W-We got ambushed on unfamiliar terrain..."

During the march, his infantry was attacked by enemies of unknown allegiance, and suffered casualties.



If it was just a couple hundred infantry,	, Jerome's subordinate would suffice.

But if the numbers exceed a thousand, oral commands couldn't be heard anymore.

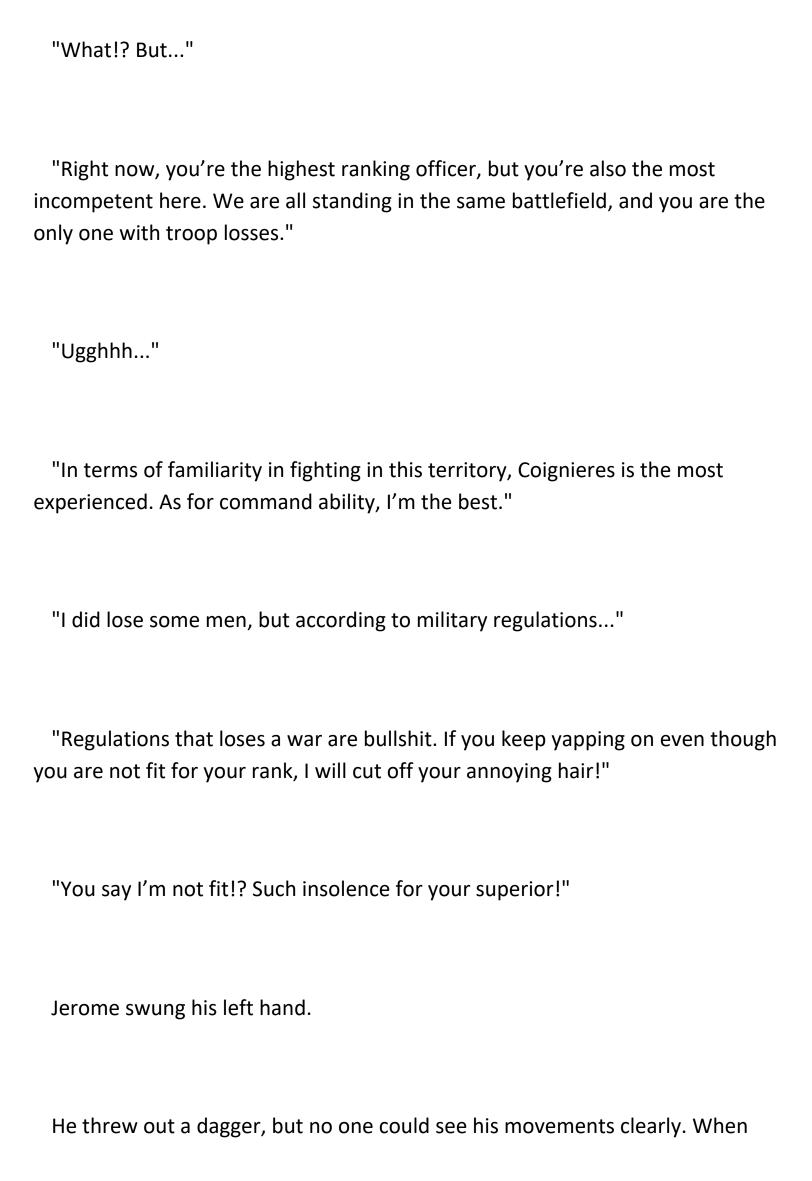
It would no longer be a group, but an organization.

Regis who could adjust his command style as the number of troops increased was an exception. Normally, such a post couldn't be given to someone without the specialized training.

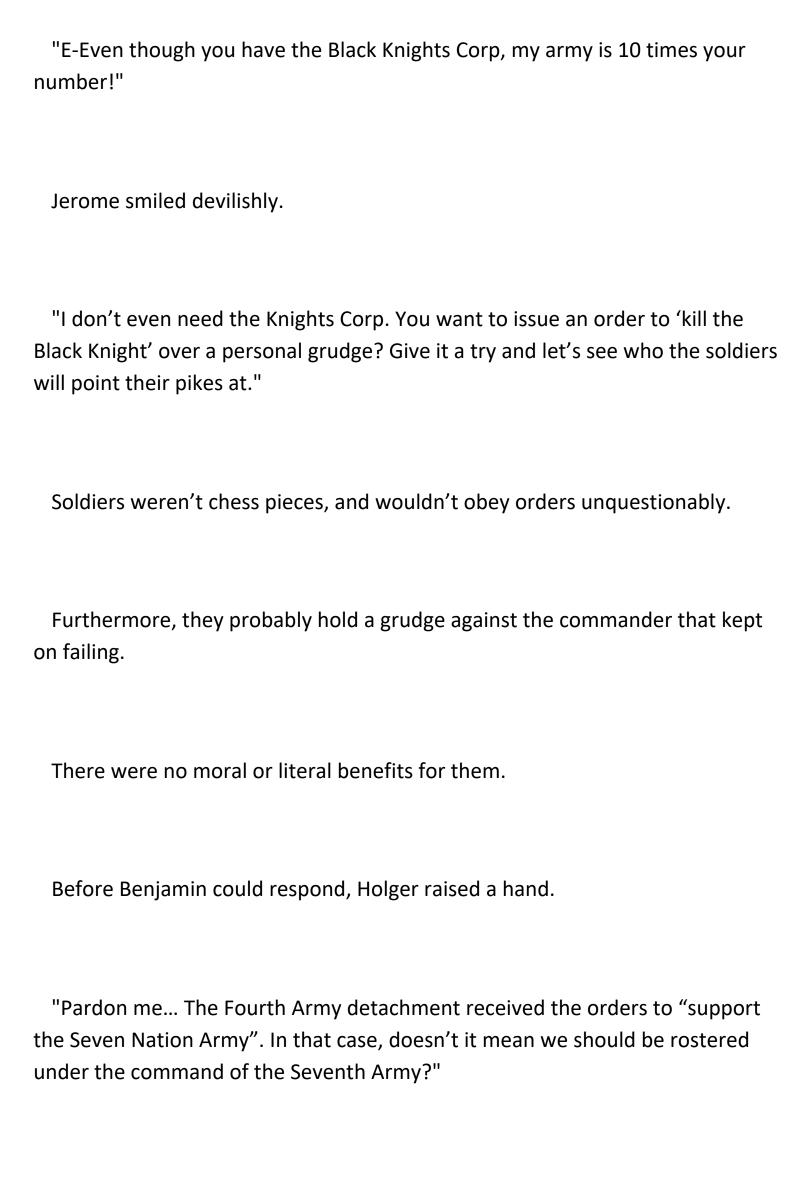
Even though he was incompetent, Benjamin was still a noble and had been educated in the ways of a commander.

Jerome said slowly as if he was trying to carve these words inside Benjamin's head:

"Benjamin, you only got your rank because of your peerage. Stop being narcissistic about being a Lieutenant General right now. Be aware of your incompetence and follow the orders of others."









With only staff officers present, what's the point in being so stubborn over appearance?
As a typical grand noble, Benjamin would defend his dignity instinctively even if it doesn't make any sense.
Coignieres was nowhere near being a renowned strategist, but he was no fool.
At the very least, he knew authority wouldn't win him a battle, and understood how to watch out for sneak attacks.
If Benjamin follows his command, the situation would be much better than before.
Coignieres laid out a map on the table.
It was a map of the eastern front.

Wooden chess pieces were placed on top.

"Gentlemen, as you already know... Events that happened in the imperial capital caused tension in the eastern borders to rise. The nations at our borders used to attack whenever a chance presented itself, and we fought them several times in recent years. There was a short period of peace when the Emperor married the Princess of Estaburg though."

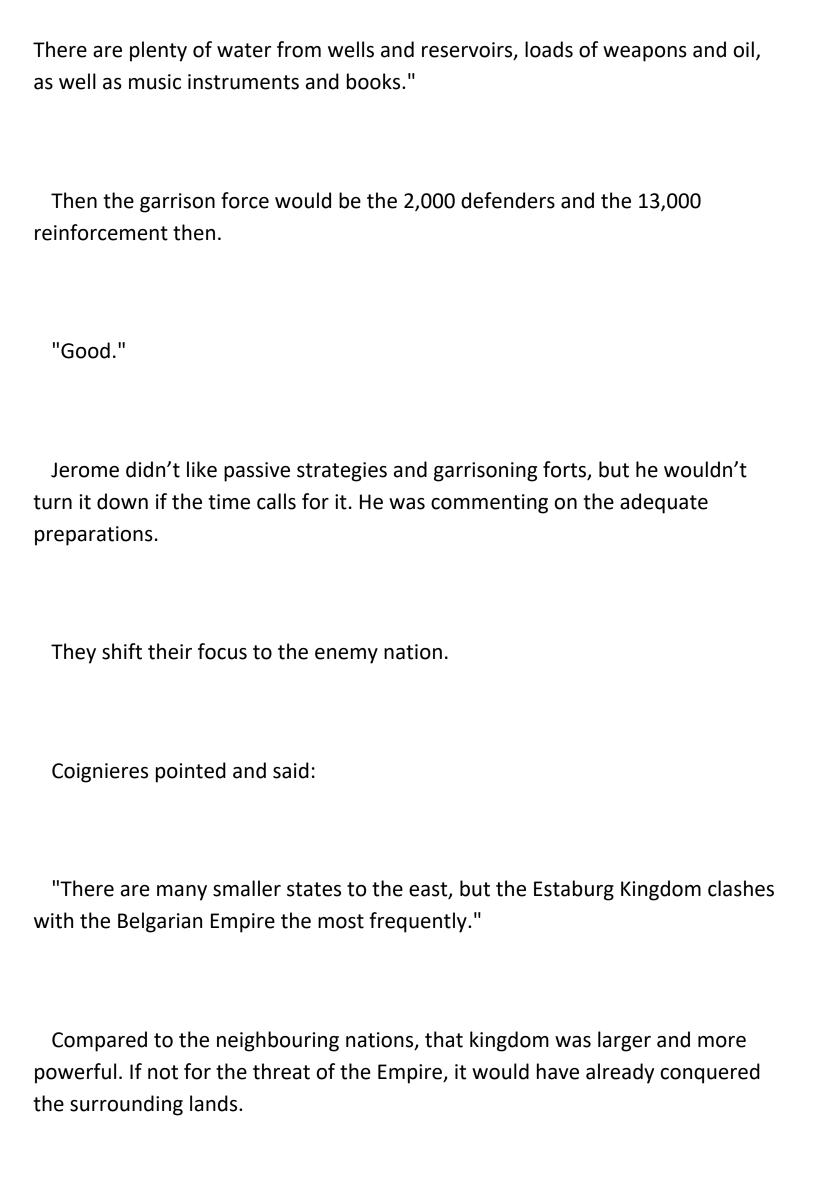
Johaprecia Octovia — The sixth royal consort died suddenly with many suspicious points.

And naturally, The kingdom of Estaburg was the most hostile out of all the neighbouring countries. The enemy that ambushed Benjamin's unit was probably mercenaries hired by them.

Jerome stared at the map.

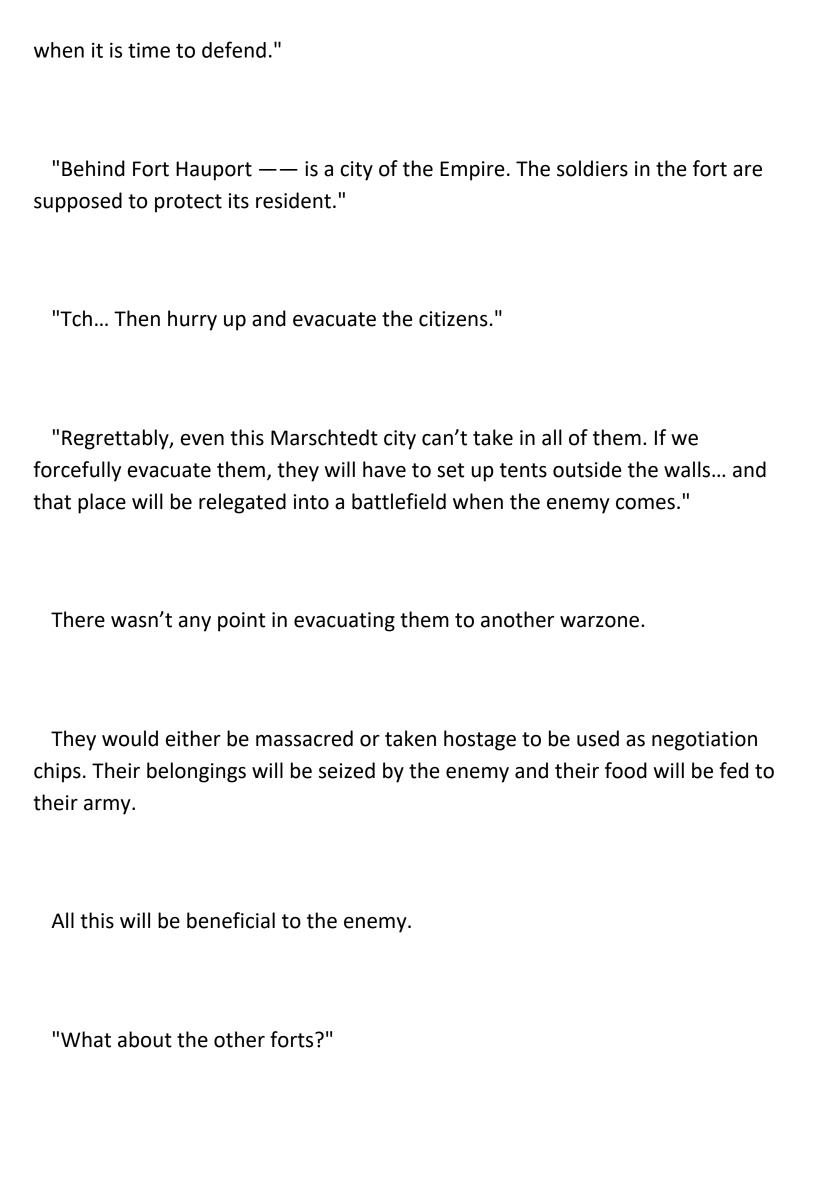
"How's this city's defences?"

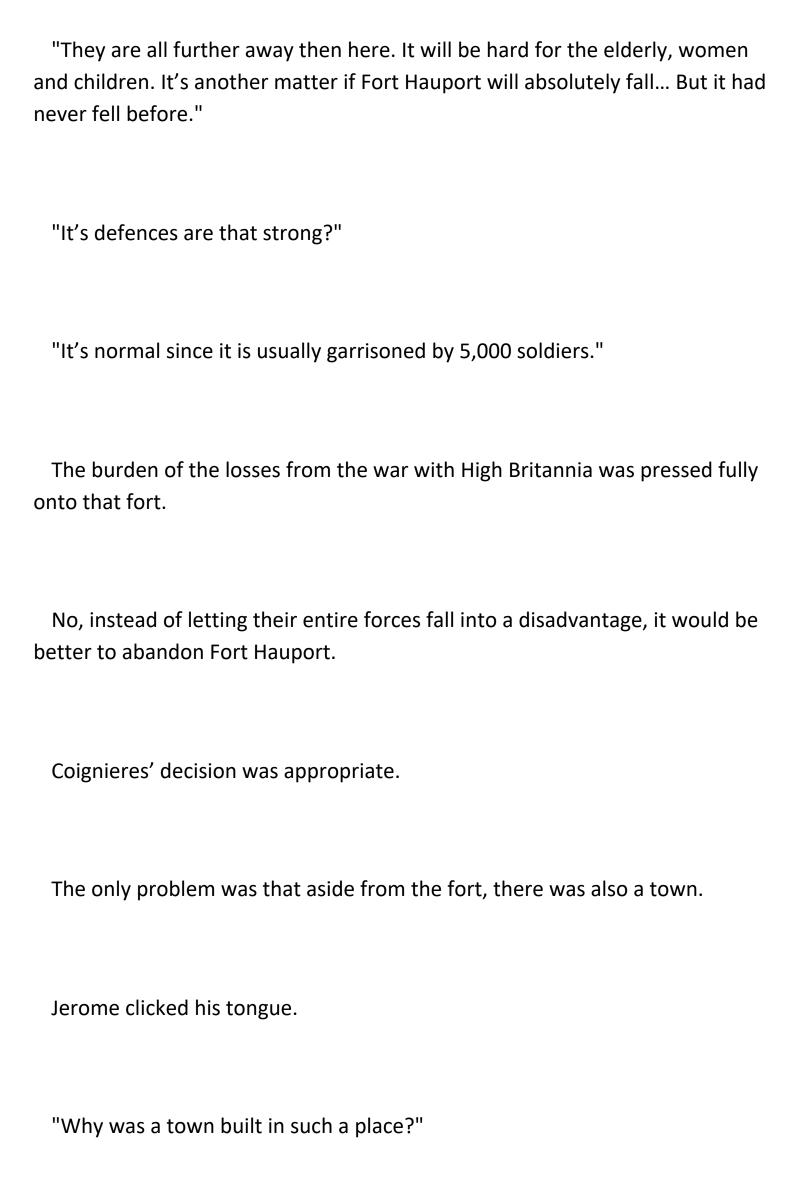
"The fortress city Marschtedt are garrisoned by 2,000 men from the Seventh Army. The walls are sturdy, with numerous trebuchet and a few cannons. There are enough supplies to last 30,000 troops and 50,000 citizens for half a year.

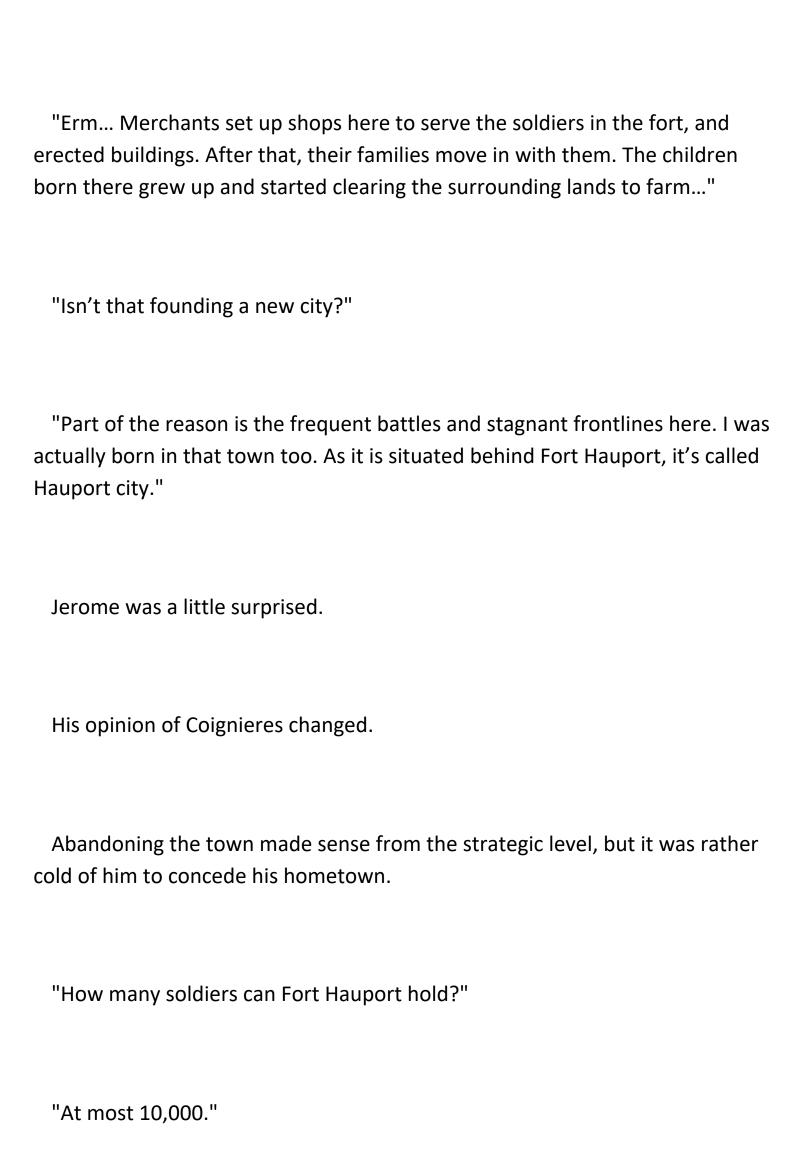


A dense forest laid between the Estaburg Kingdom and the Empire, which the Imperial soldiers were not proficient in fighting in.
The enemy would have the upperhand in a forest battle, while Belgaria had the advantage in plains warfare.
That was why the frontlines reached an impasse here.
Marschtedt was surrounded by wheatfields. They had the advantage of terrain in a field battle, the city didn't have any weak points, a well secured place.
A chess piece was put some distance away.
"What is this?"
After hearing Jerome's question, Coignieres replied hesitantly:
" That's Fort Hauport. It was built to expand our territory."





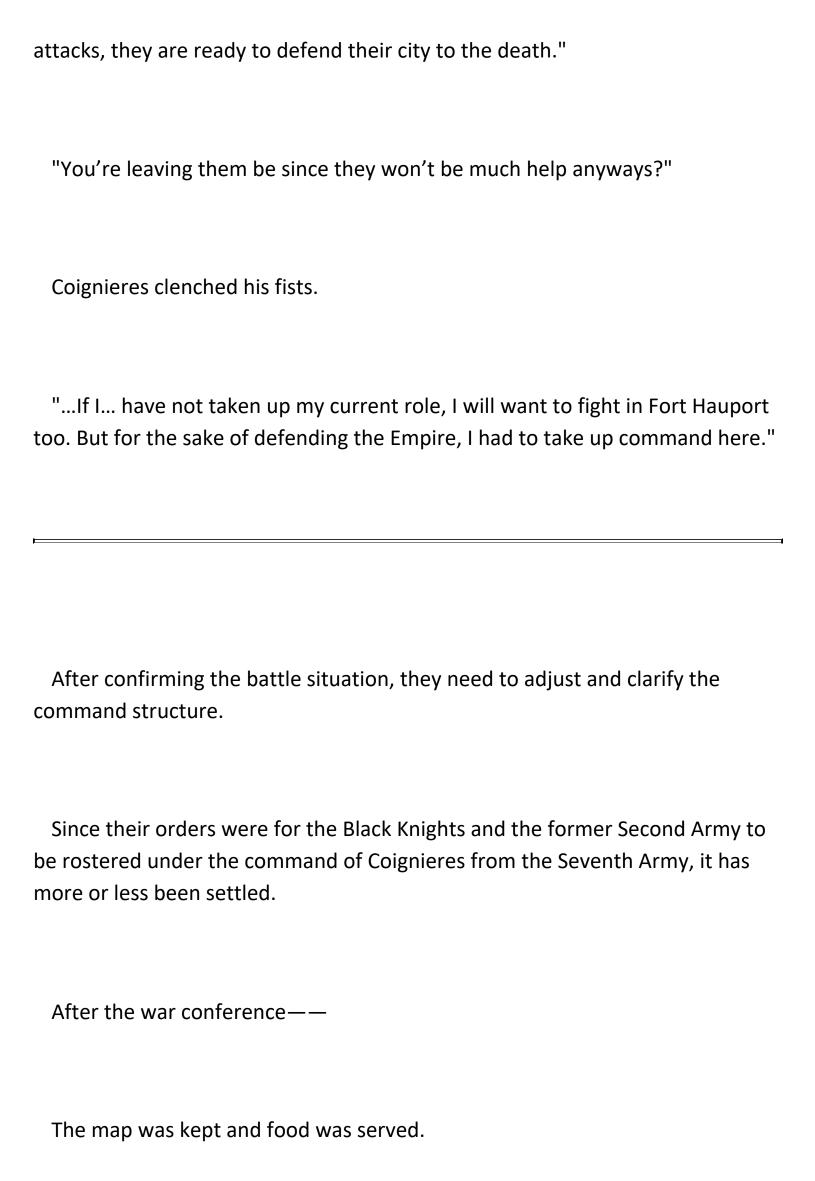


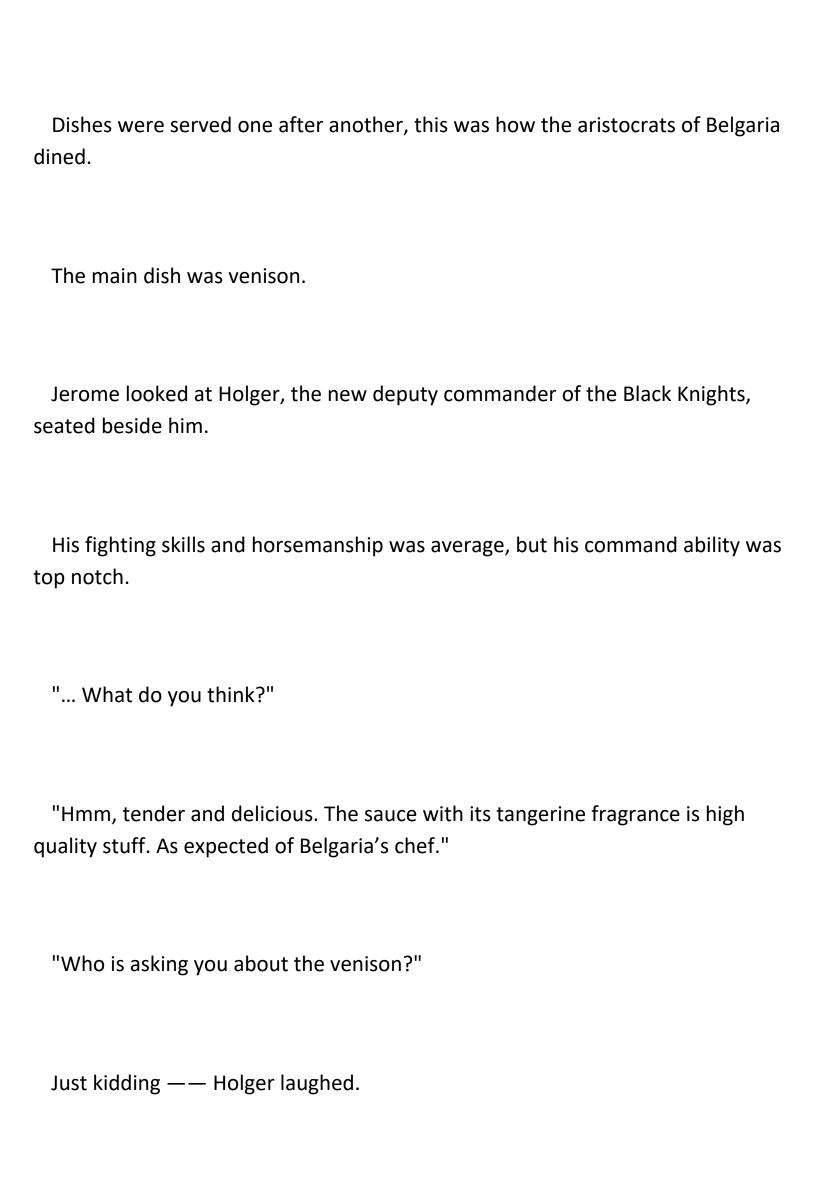


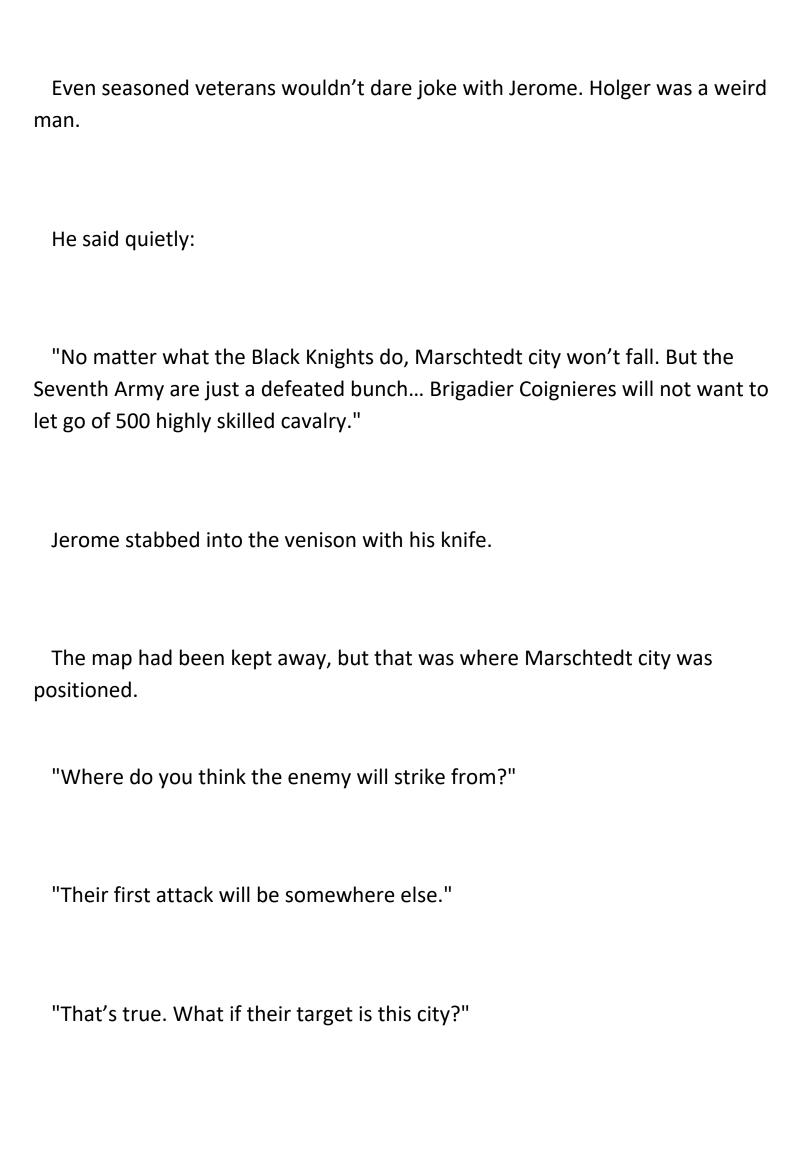
"As expected of a city fort." In the past, Jerome was based in a small fort called Sierck. These two were probably about the same size. A skirmish would be fine, but if the enemy outnumber the defenders more than three times, the fort would be lost. It was useless to blame Coignieres who just became the commander some days ago... It was necessary to build a city before expanding a fort, but building a city with just a small fort was prohibited. Jerome himself banned shops from being set up near Fort Siercks. That would make the lives of the soldiers less convenient, but in case anything happened, they still had the option of abandoning Fort Sierck and pulling back to the border city of Tunovell.

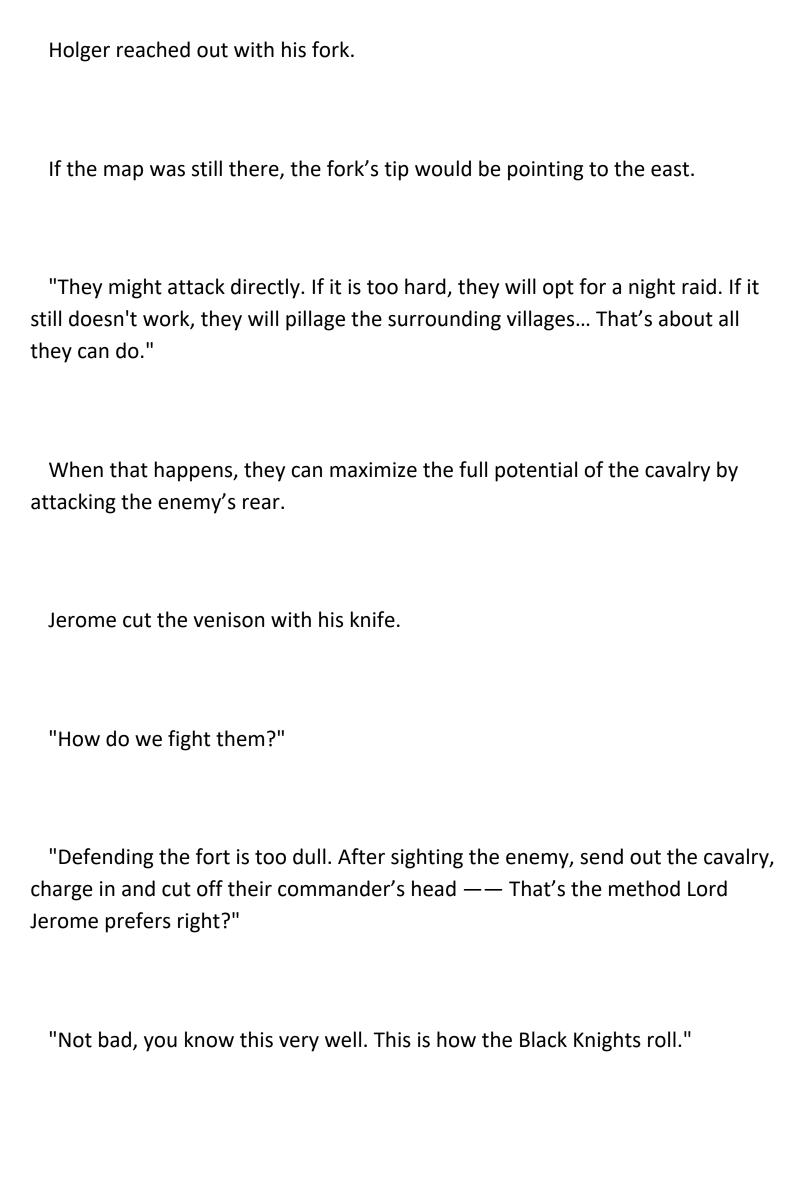
"You can't build a roofless house just because it is a sunny day."

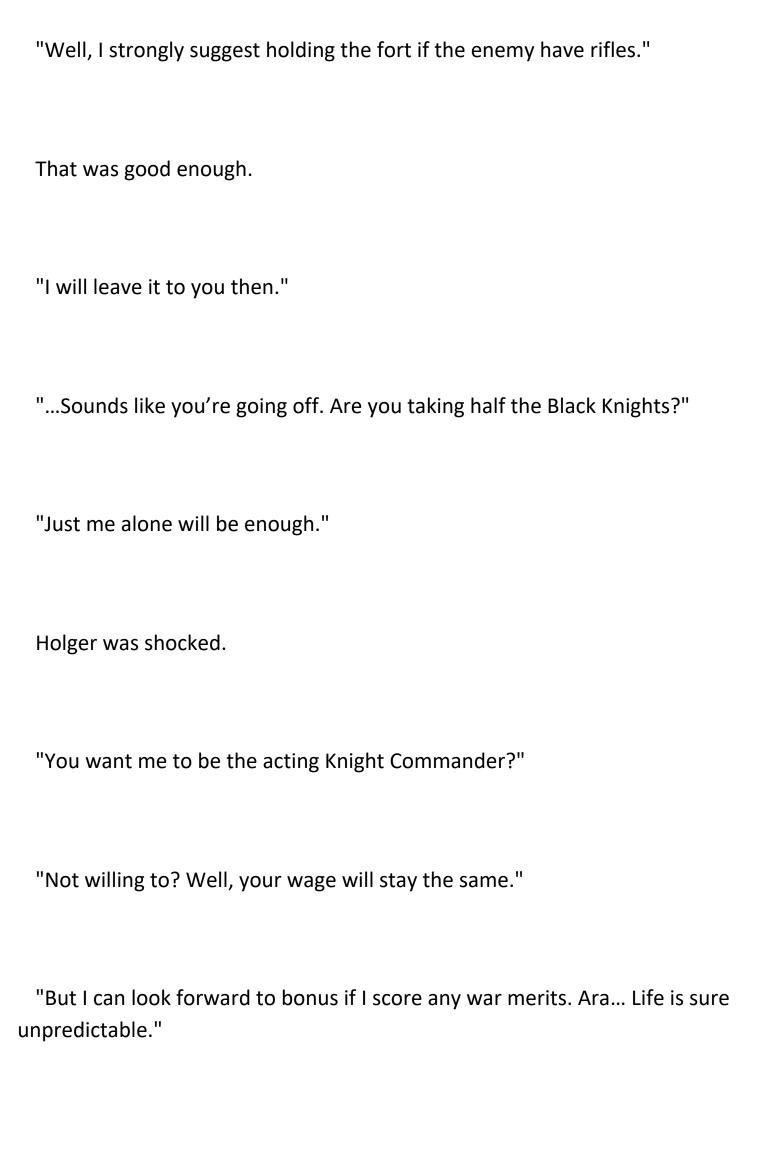
When he heard what Jerome said, Coignieres nodded.
"Works to expand Marschtedt city is still ongoing. We can take in all the residents of Hauport if it goes smoothly But it will only be done in spring next year."
That would take almost a year.
If the enemy will wait that long, there won't be any need to send the Fourth Army detachment here.
"If the citizens don't want to leave their city, then let them be. But we can't waste those 600 soldiers, put them to use elsewhere."
" I don't know if they will obey even if I ordered them."
"What's going on? Are the 600 men here someone's private army?"
"Because the garrison in Fort Hauport hailed from Hauport City. And they are recruits and old timers that didn't join the expedition If Estaburg Kingdom



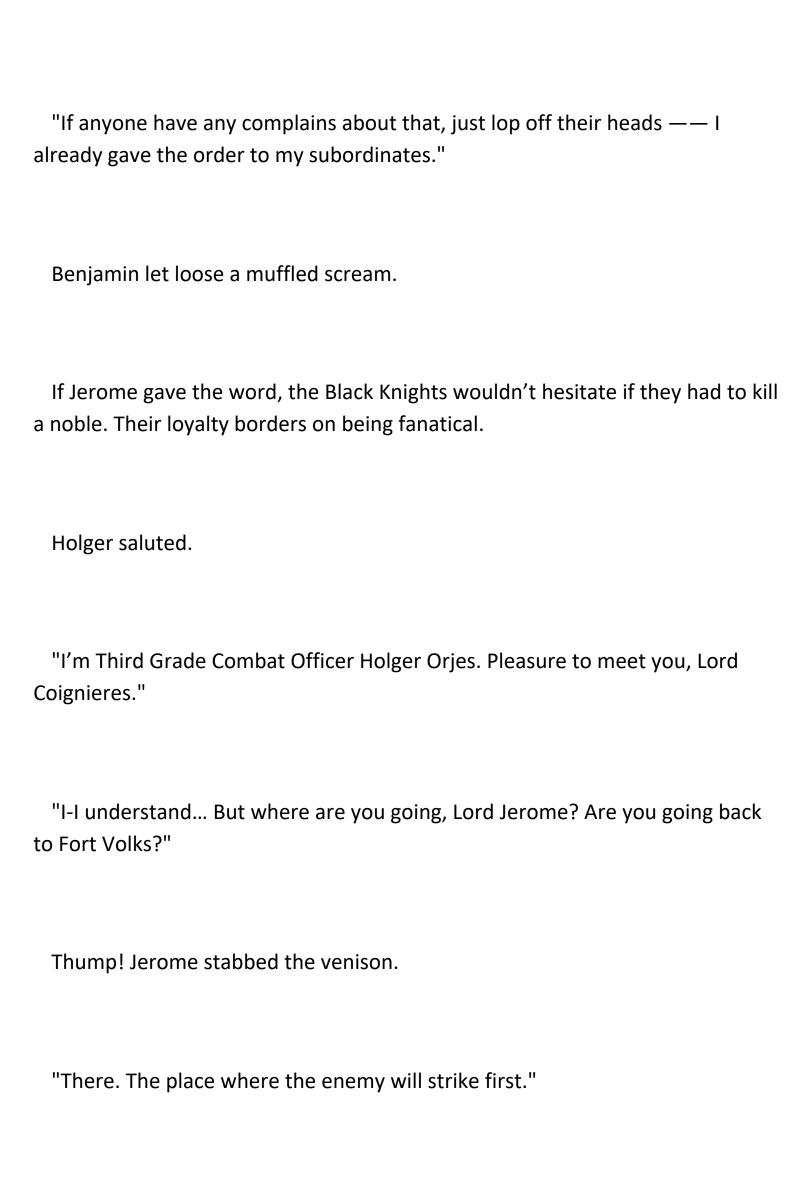


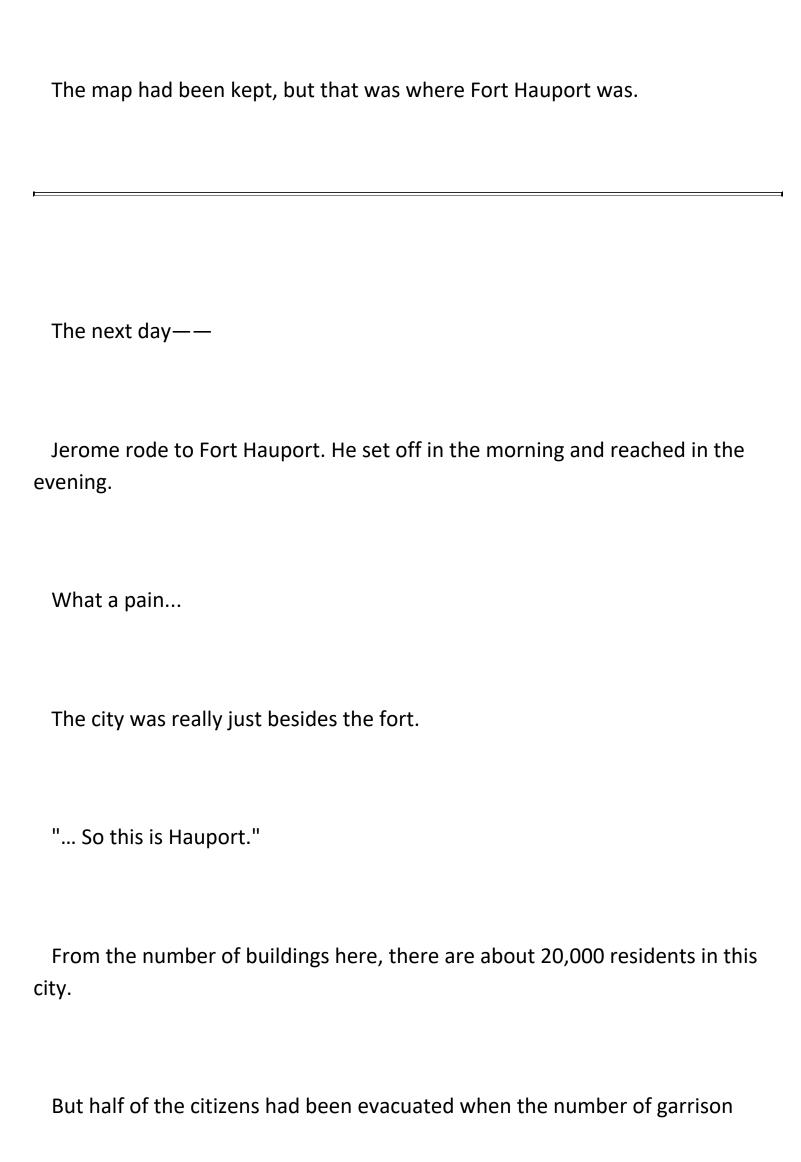




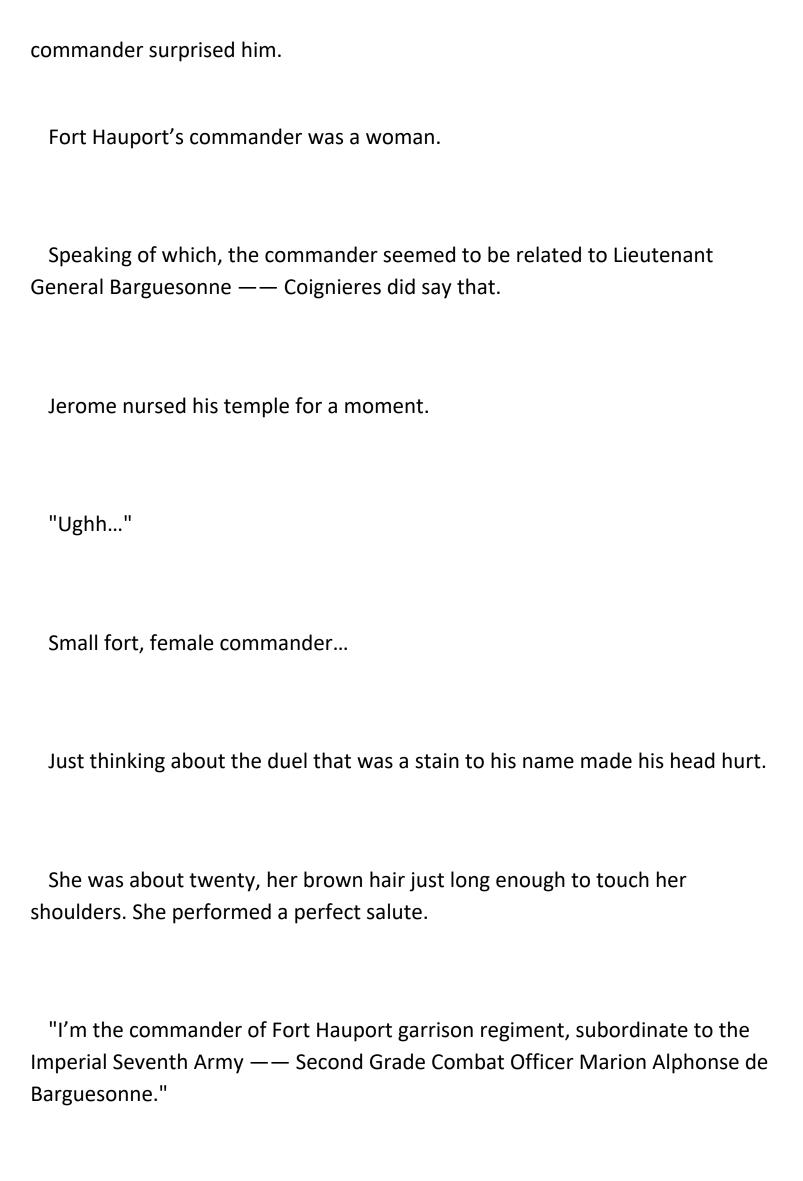


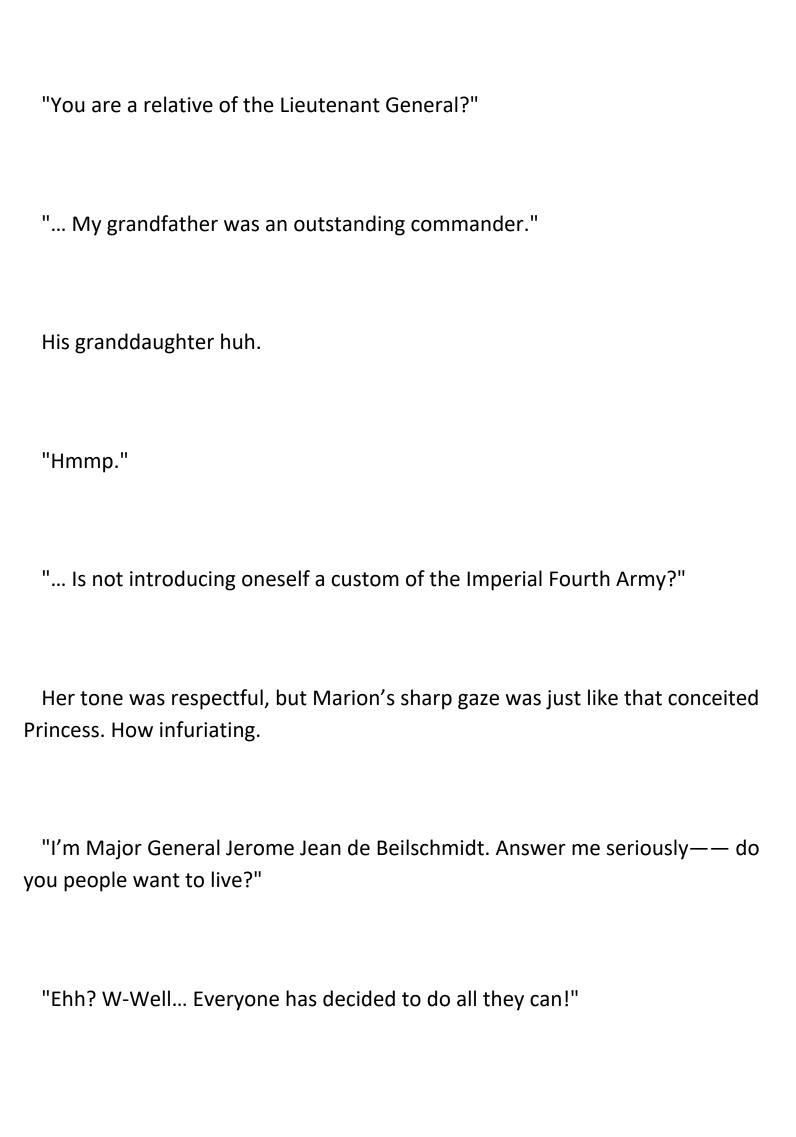
Jerome handed command of the Black Knights over to Holger.
They would just be standing by inside the solid walls of Marschtedt city for the time being anyways.
He stood up.
"Coignieres!"
"Y-Yes, what's the matter!? Want some salt!?"
"I'm not talking about the venison! Holger Orjes over here will be covering my duties. Just talk to him if you have any orders for the cavalry."
"Ehh?"
"Even if I'm not here, we won't lose in the open plains as long as the Black Knights are here. I already told you You will have overall command here."
"Y-Yes."

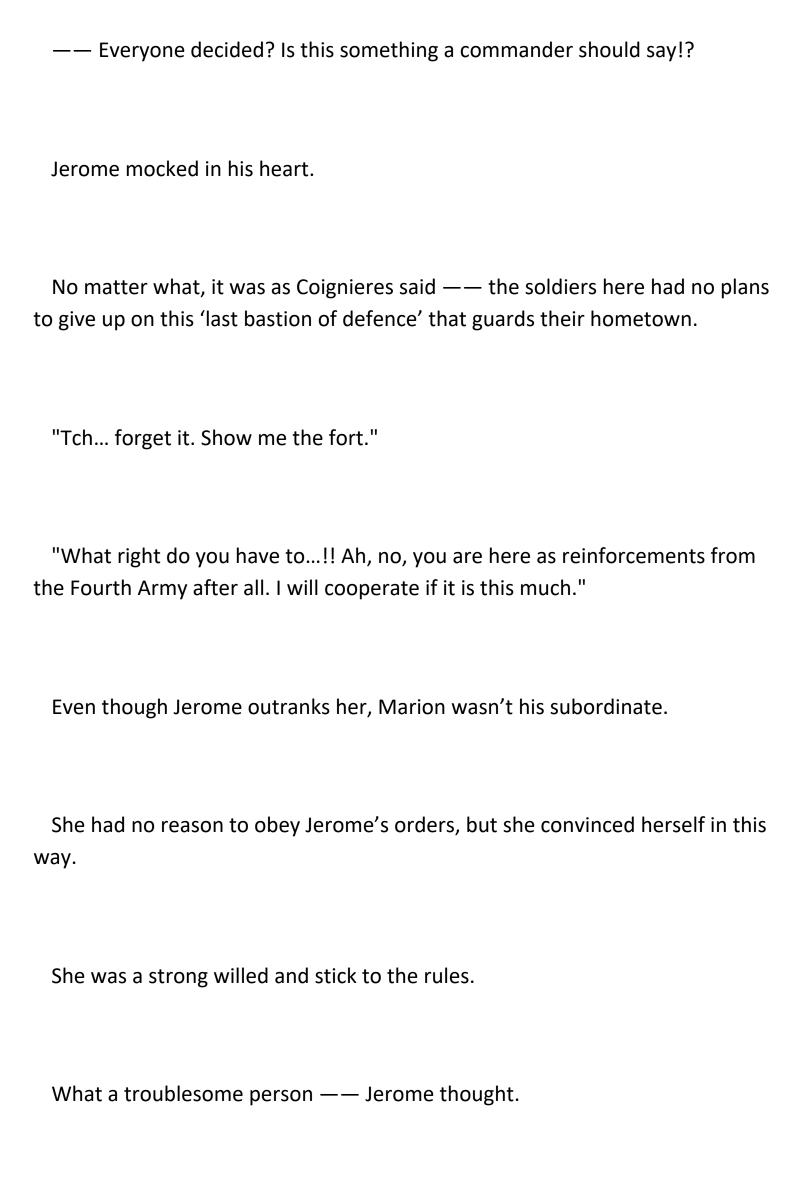


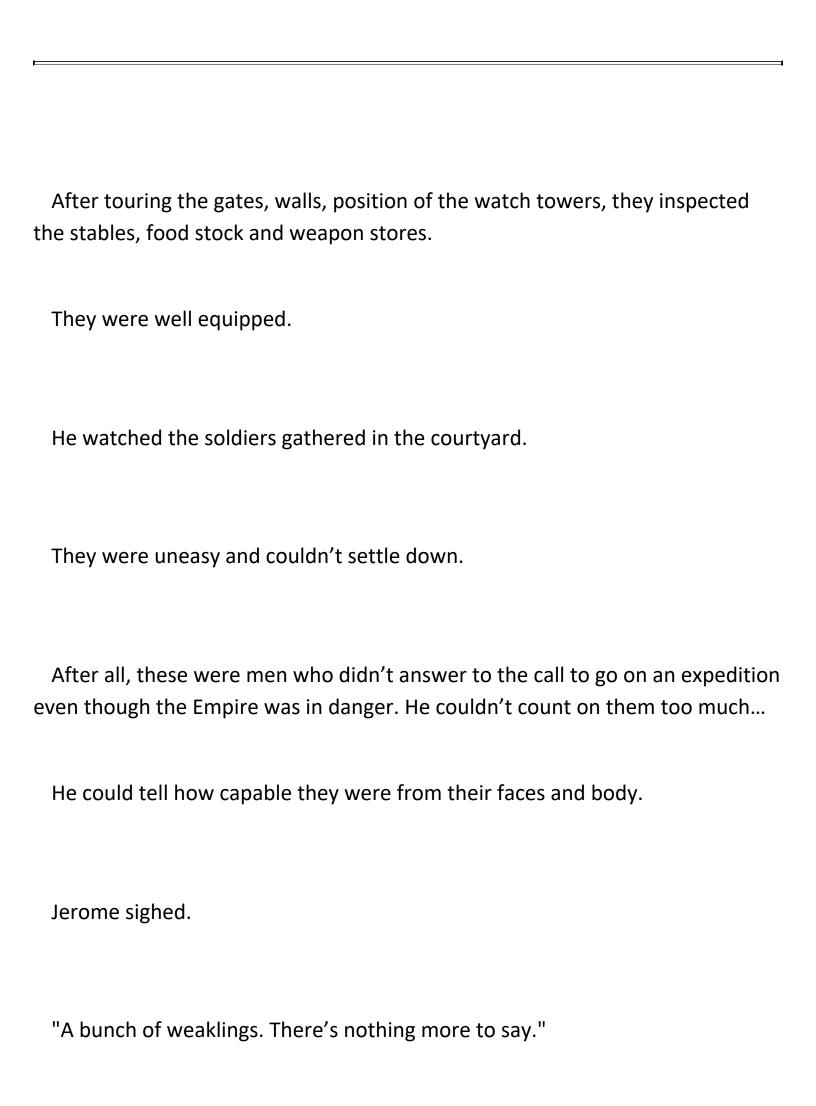


troops had been reduced. There were only about 10,000 sick and frail citizens left.
The figures of children and the elderly who would have a hard time traveling long distances were prominent.
After going past the main street where the shops were, Jerome saw a stone wall that wasn't very tall. There was a watch tower here.
It reminded him of Fort Sierck.
When he was assigned from the capital to the borders, the feelings of rage he felt when he saw that small fort was rising again within him.
Jerome gritted his teeth.
He handed a letter to the guard at the gate and declared who he was.
This caused an uproar.
The fort commander came immediately.
Jerome heard that there were only recruits and the elderly here, but the

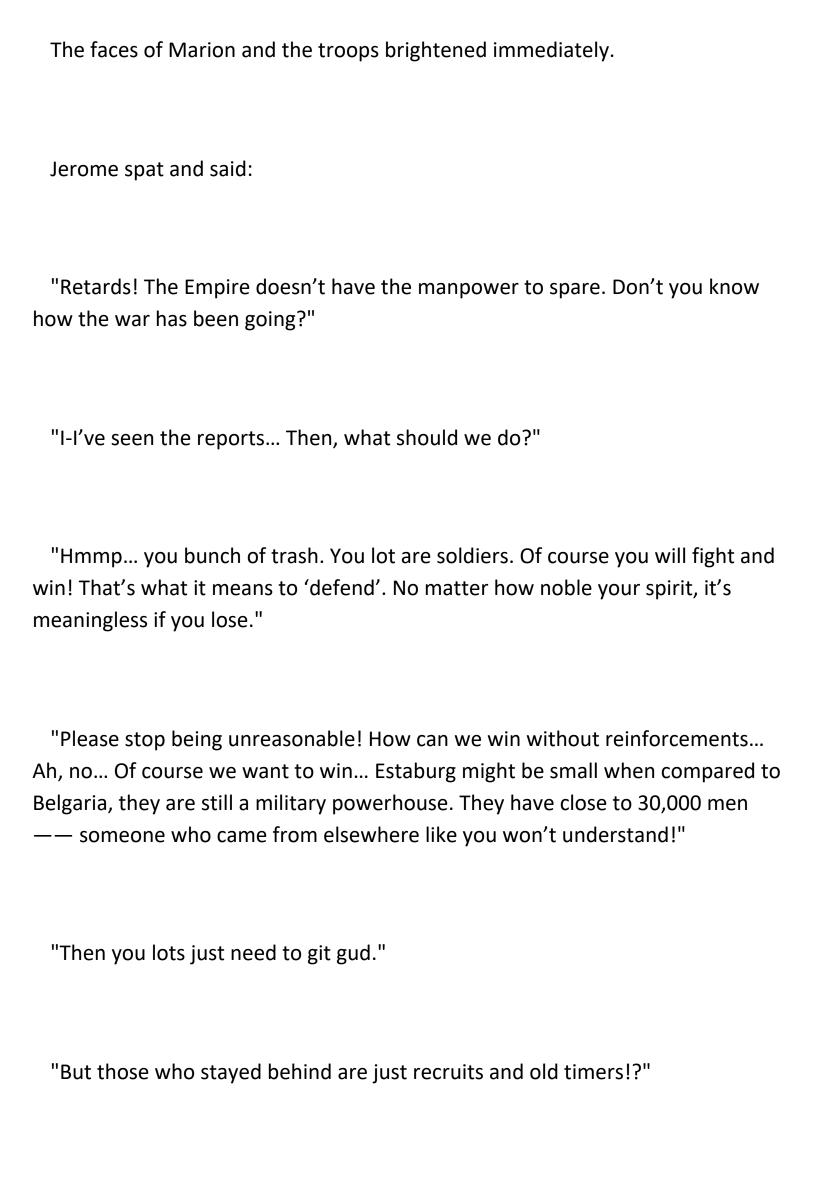






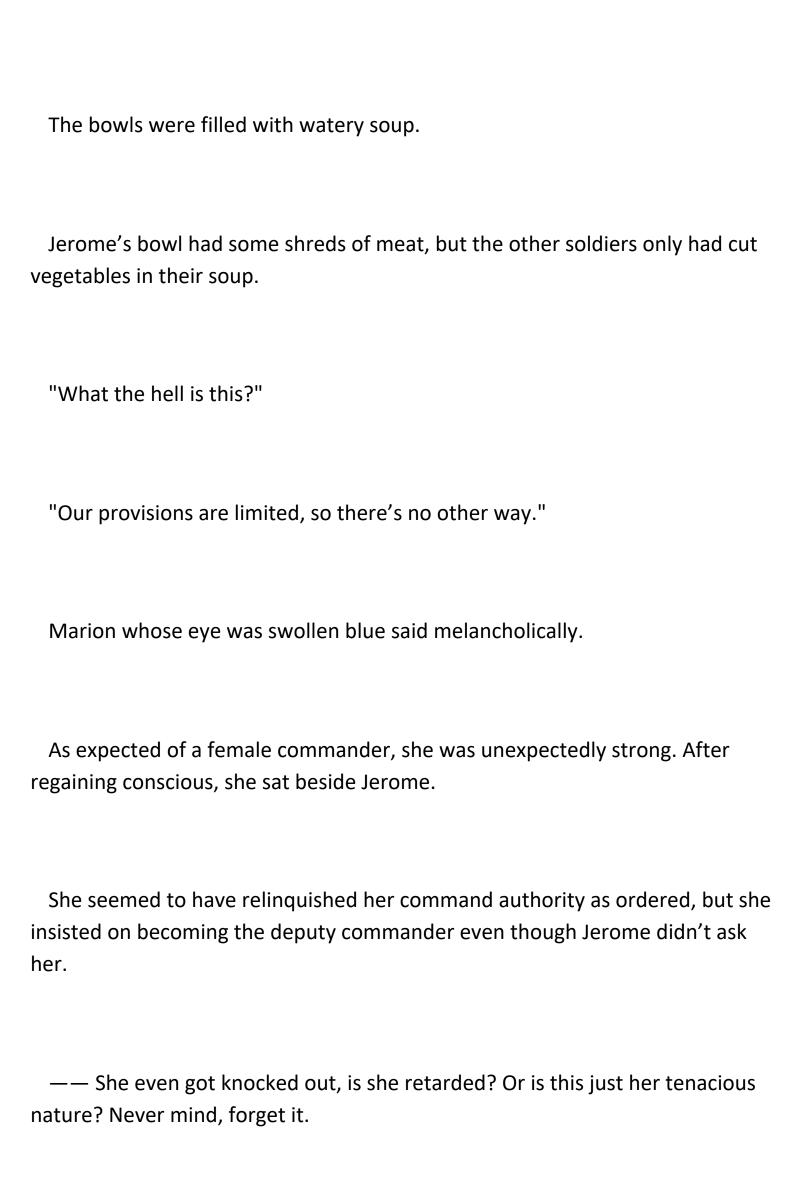


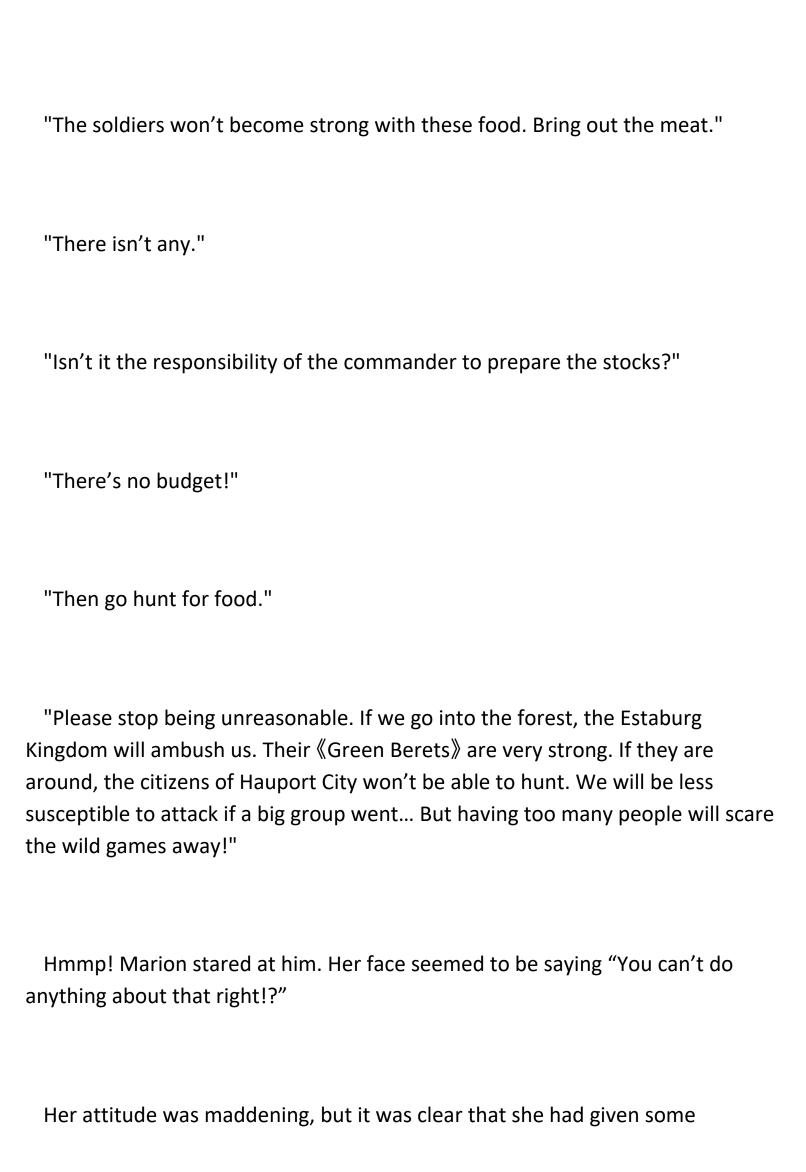


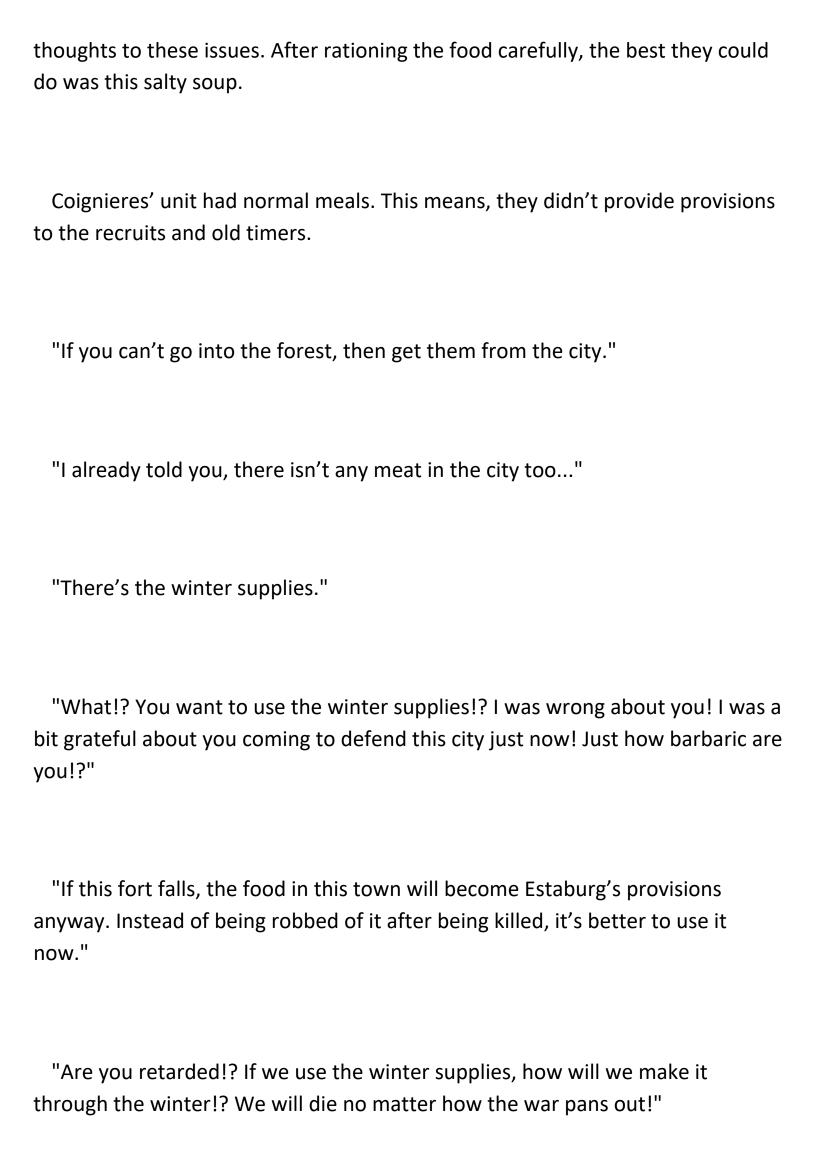




This sent the soldiers into further confusion.
The exploits of the black knight had also spread to the east. Everyone knew he was incredibly powerful.
And he hit a girl. Even though Belgaria was a patriarchal society, men who hit women were thought to be like barbarians. It was a violent act unthinkable for the aristocrats.
Will they be killed if they opposed him? The troops grew stiff.
Alright then, Jerome nodded.
"First, let's eat!"
Now that he mentioned it, they remembered. It was almost time for dinner.
Utensils were set on the table.







The enemy might come here tonight, and she was still worried about winter? Even Jerome was stunned.

But on second thought, those who were even a little bit aware of the danger had already skipped town.

Those left behind were the ones who wanted to live on just like the way they had lived in the past.

Or those who had given up...

Or stopped thinking...

Even if he issued the order, the soldiers here all hailed from Hauport. Morale would plummet if they were given direct orders to seize their hometown's winter provisions, and couldn't be ignored.

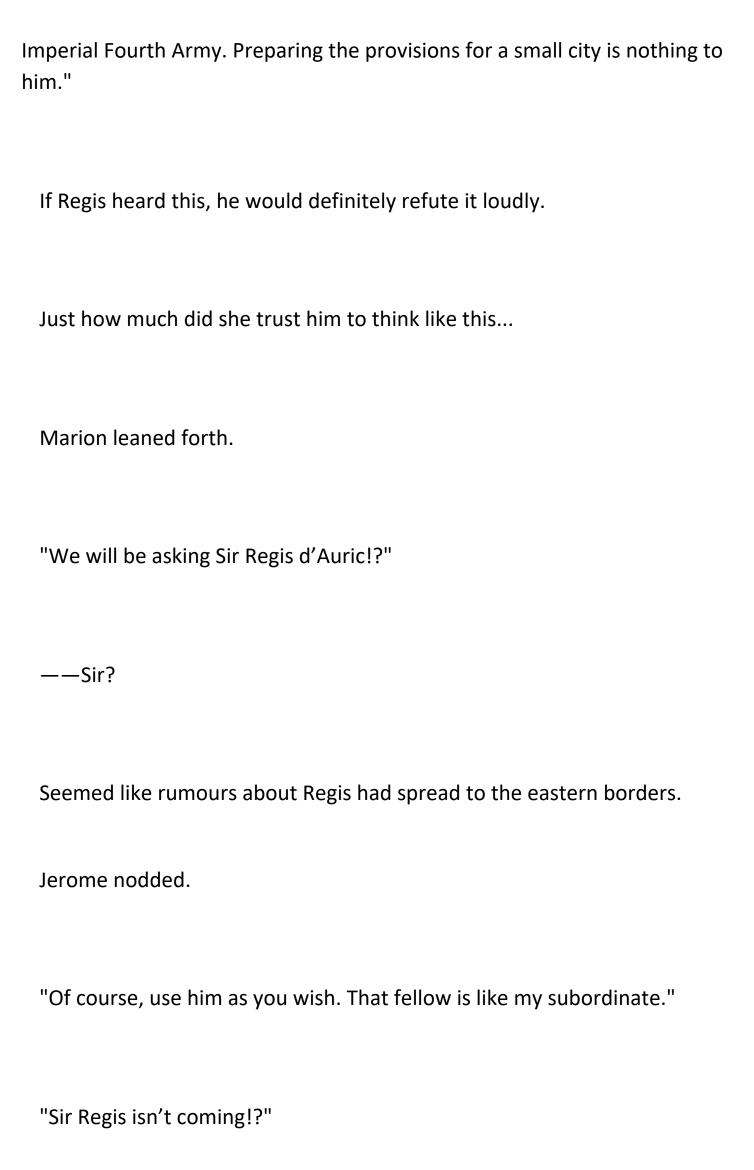
"Hmmp... It can't be helped. I will prepare the winter provisions. So get the food from the city first."

"How are you going to do that? We don't have the funds to buy food from other territories."

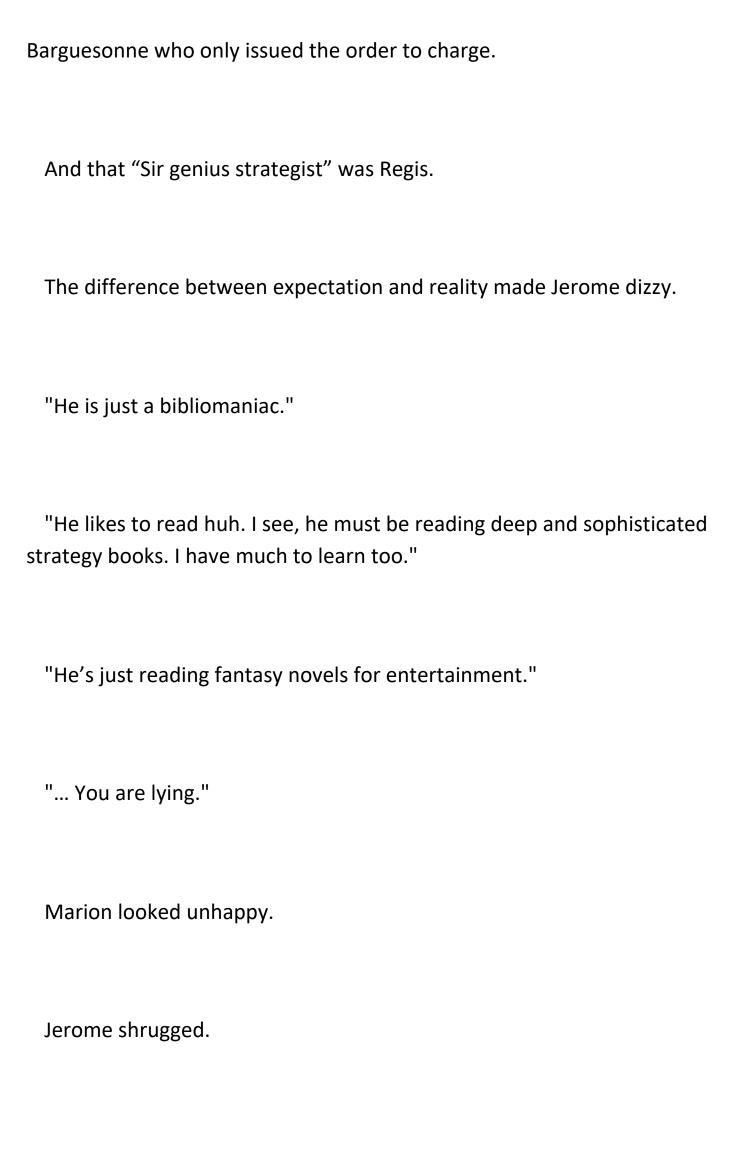
An impoverished duke—— Jerome sighed in his heart.

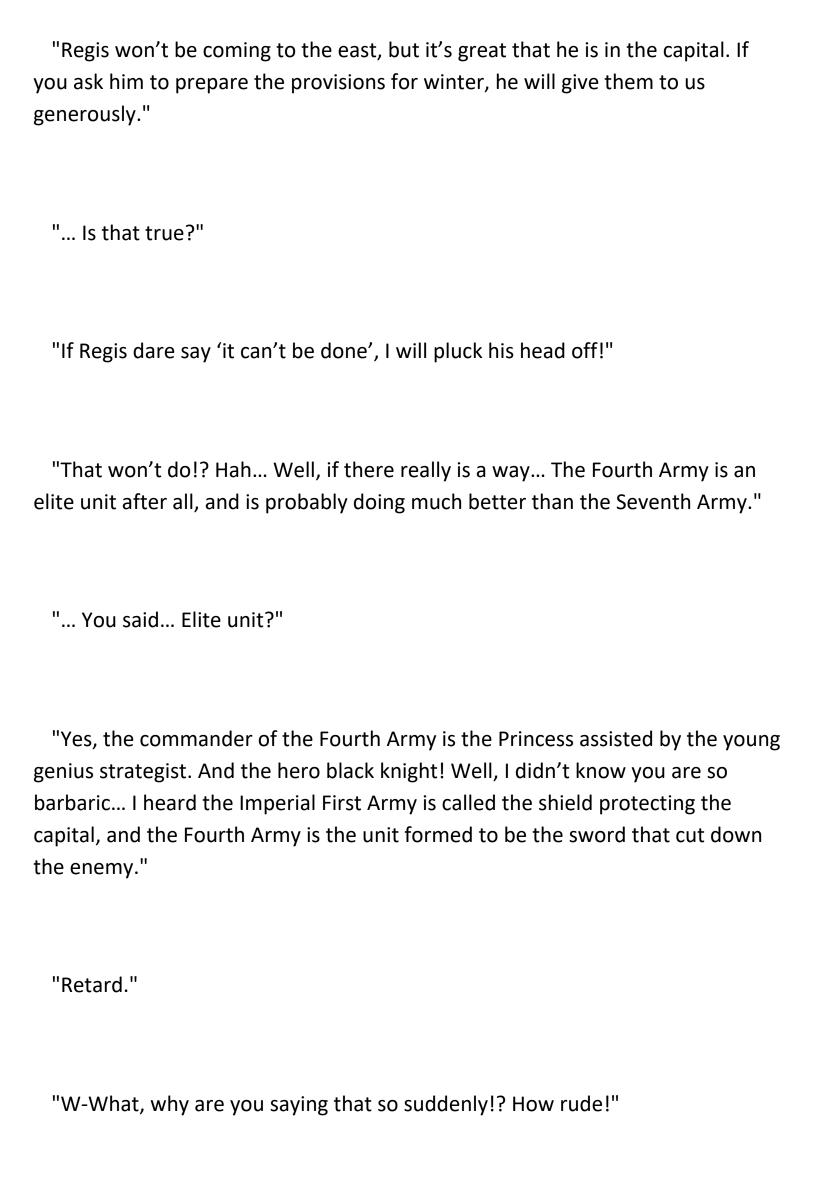
General Barguesonne who guards the borders might be a Duke, but didn't impose the minimal taxation and lacked personal wealth. Jerome heard that he would repair his old armour with a few knocks and continue to use it. And the food that needs to be preserved was much more expensive than food procured locally. If they could hunt in the woods, they just need two months to gather enough meat for the city to make it through winter. But if they worked for two months, they wouldn't be able to raise the money to purchase the same amount of food. Even for the Belgarian Empire where the main roads were well maintained, the transportation cost was a sizeable expenditure. Jerome delegated the troublesome stuff away.

"No problem, leave it to me. There is a strategist called the "Wizard" in the

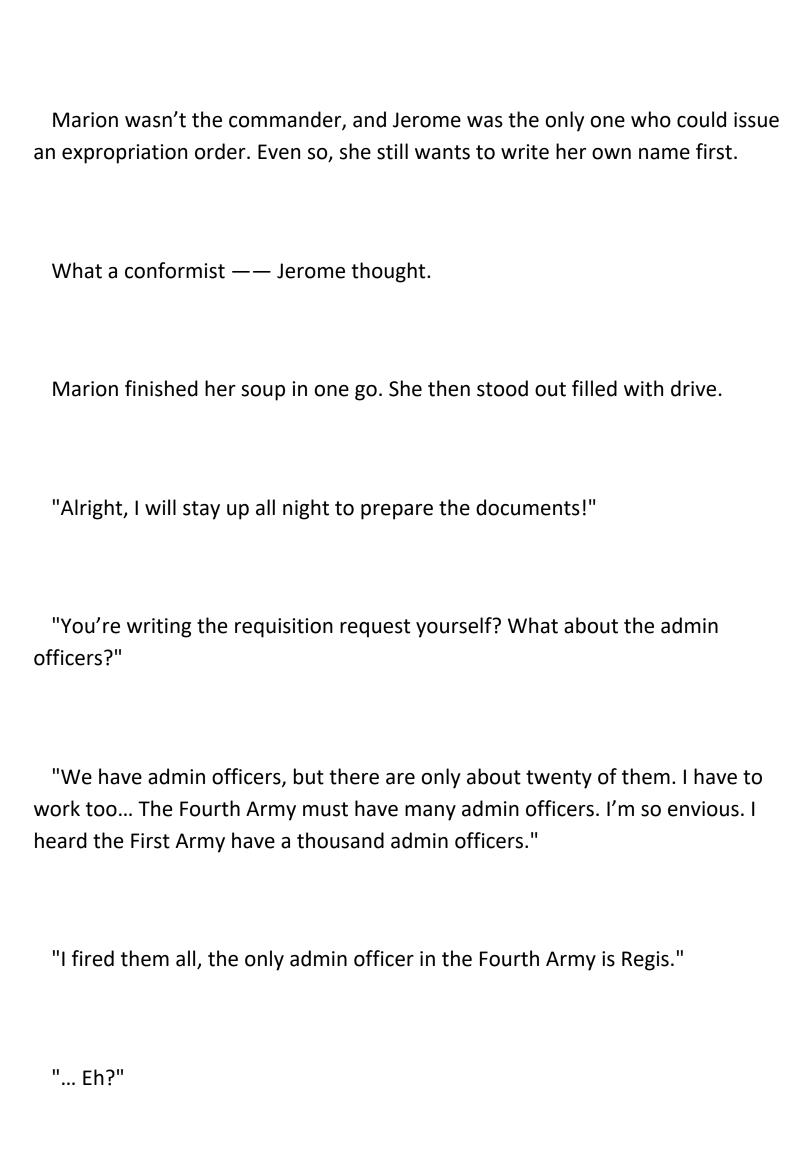


—— Hah! That trash is probably studying in the capital to pass his test!
Even though he thought this way, but raising Regis' evaluation would be beneficial to Jerome in the future, so he kept up the facade.
"The strategist is in the capital right now. He's very capable, but also very busy."
"Ah That's right. He won't come to this small fort at the borders He's the saviour of the nation after all."
Her shoulders slouched.
Marion said with a sigh.
" Even my esteemed grandfather couldn't win against the High Britannian Army, but he won a string of victory both on land and in the sea If it is that Sir genius strategist, he can definitely save this fort."
The "esteemed grandfather" she mentioned was Lieutenant General





Jerome was a hero who 'won too much' and got chased out of the capital by jealous nobles.
The Fourth Princess was banished there after losing a political struggle, and Regis was an admin officer down on his luck, forced to shoulder the blame for a lost battle and reassigned.
Maybe the grass looked greener on the other side, so others thought that this unit was incredible.
When he heard Marion said all that, Jerome felt noxious and wanted to puke.
He waved his hand as if he was shooing a dog away.
"Enough, just go. Remember to bring out meat for dinner tomorrow."
"Hmm But I won't expropriate them. I will borrow them from the citizens. Shall we issue receipts? It won't just bear my name, but yours too!?"
"Whatever."

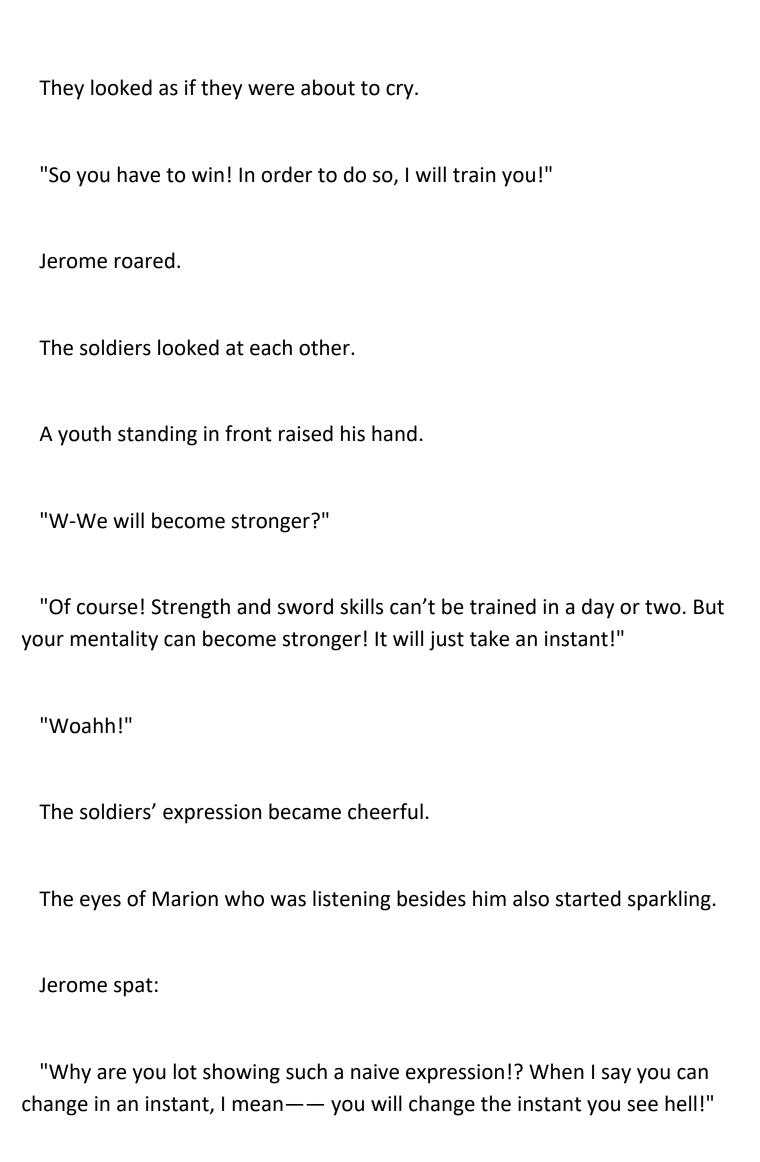


"No, there's one more subordinate of Auguste helping out. But the maids help out with everything else."
They already requested for more staff from the Ministry of Military Affairs, but this matter had been postponed because the war with High Britannia had started.
"I-It's impossible to complete the administrative works like this Ah, you're lying to me again!? I won't be tricked by you! Don't look down on me just because I'm from a backwater city!"
Marion pouted and walked away.
Jerome brought the soup to his mouth.
It would be great if they could prepare the provisions
He needed to relay the situation here to Regis. So he needed to write a letter. It wasn't until the extent of that Princess, but Jerome hated writing.
He clicked his tongue.

And felt unmotivated.







"H-Hell!?" The atmosphere of hope that was hyped up disappeared in an instant. Jerome raised the corners of his lips. "I will let you witness hell! So change properly for the sake of defeating the enemy — No, when the time comes, you probably won't think much of the enemy." Marion panicked. "W-Wait! What are you going to do!? There's only recruits and old timers here!? If you go too far, they will be worn out before the battle..." "Who cares about that! We will start the 'you will rather be dead' training today! No, people will actually die. Those without drive, those not capable enough and those who are unlucky!" "That won't do!" "Anyone who can't do it can sound out. I can excuse him from training." Marion patted her chest in relief. The soldiers also showed an expression that says "Since you say so".

"You lots... really want to live your entire lives in a decadent way huh. You believe you won't be treated harshly just because you're weak soldiers. Even now, when the enemy might come this day and murder your entire family, you still can't find the resolve to die for the cause. Retards! That's why you lot are the worst unit. It has nothing to do with being recruits or old timer. It's because of your wimpy nature! That's why you all will die, every single one of you!"

"What...!?"

The faces of Marion and the soldiers turned green.

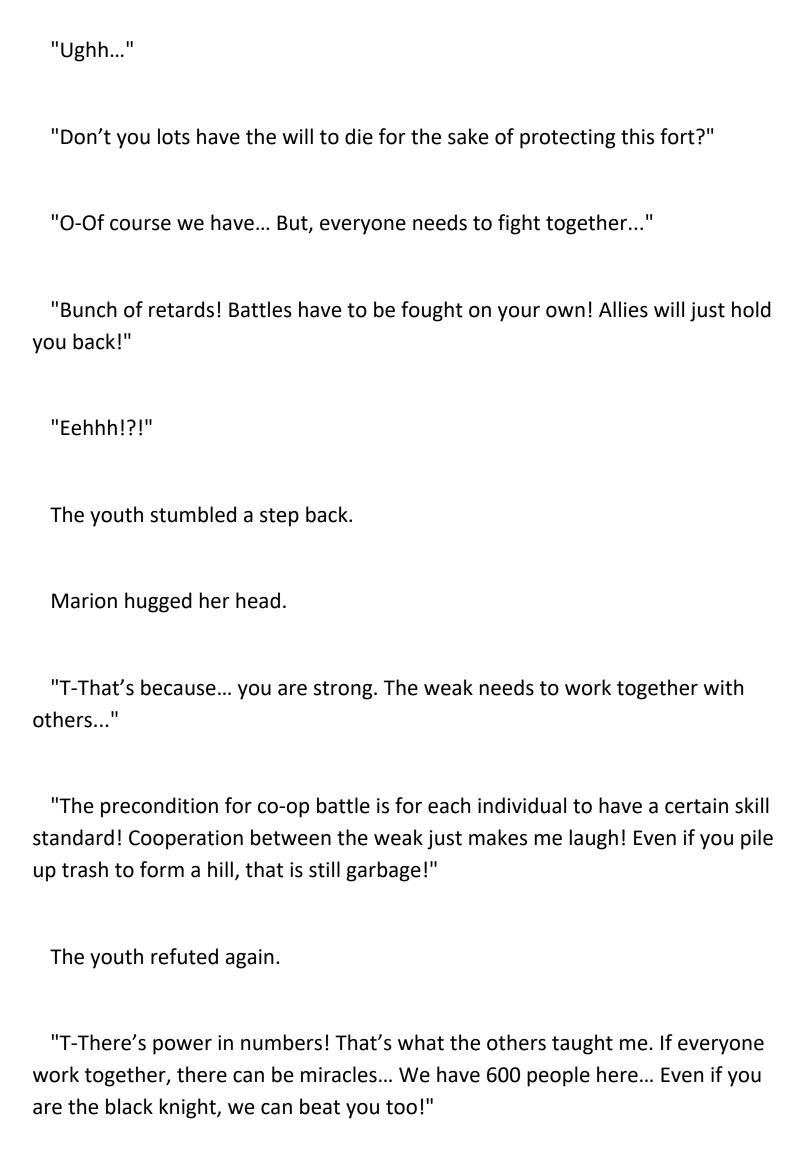
He didn't care how scared they were, and spoke mercilessly.

"I'm not a drill instructor. This is not a boot camp. You are in a fort, at the front line, a warzone! I will treat weaklings like weaklings. Those who can't keep up with today's training just sound out. I will assign them to hunt wild games in the forest."

The soldier who raised his hand stepped forward.

"This is tyranny! It's as good as telling us to die! There are 《Green Berets》 in the forest! How can you give such a cruel order!?"

"Hmmp, then complain to the Ministry... I don't mind. When those damn bureaucrats in the capital slowly make their way here in the autumn to investigate, you think this fort will still be here?"





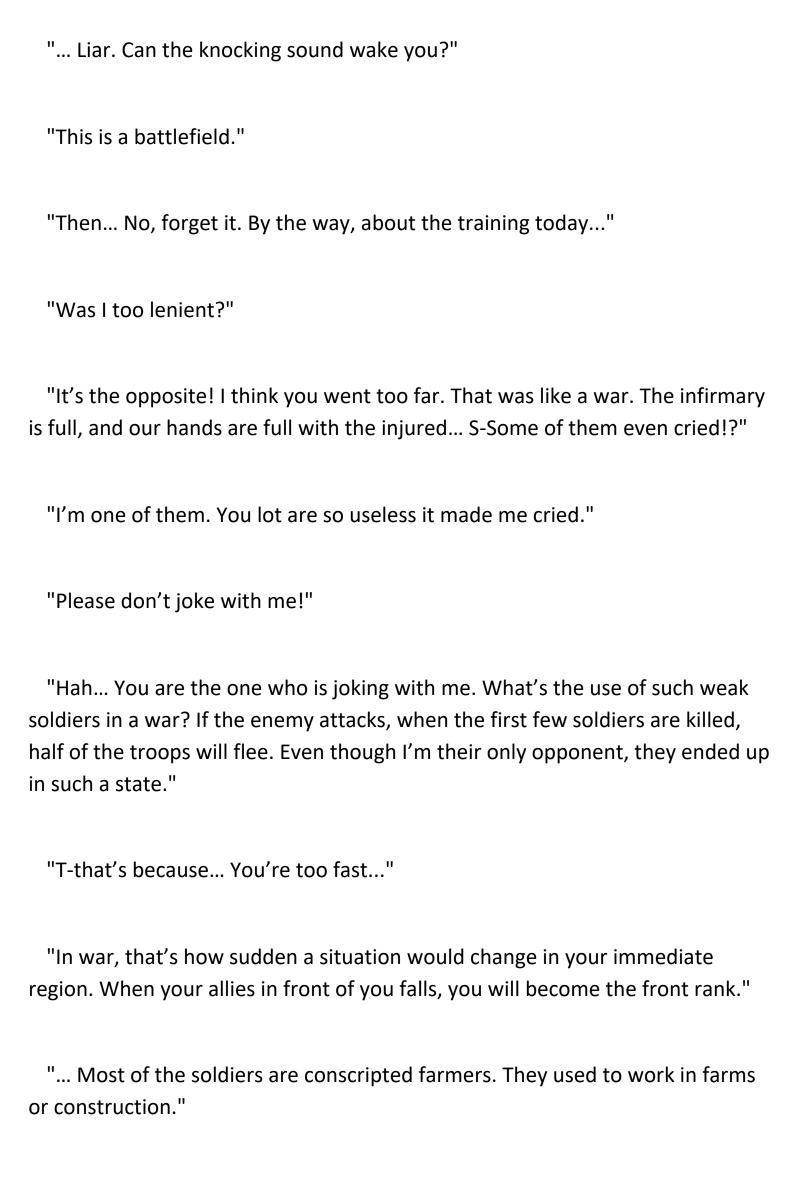
"What are you saying...!?" The young soldier flew into the air. He was sent flying because Jerome punched him in the stomach. At the same time, he snatched the sword fastened to the soldier's waist. It was a mass produced product of the military, but it was well taken care of. "Hmmp... Only your weapon is good. Oh right, let me say this first, this is training. Anyone who runs from this plaza will be treated as desertion before the enemy —— I will really kill them. If you don't want to die, then don't run." "K-Kill him ahhhh——!!" Another soldier charged him. Jerome leaned back to dodge. He then hit that person with the flat of his sword, flooring him. Next, he swing his sword at someone just standing with a blank face. Blood gush out from that man's forehead. "Ahhh——!?"

"How careless! Dozing off in my face!? You have a death wish!?"



"Ara, even though we had turkey for breakfast."
"D-Demon."
"Kukuku don't be retarded $$ I'm a good guy who won't talk back when the priest lectures me during mass."
The soldiers finally understood the situation.
The man before them was a hero, had extraordinary prowess, a terrible personality and didn't care about the sanctity of life.
Marion shouted:
"Everyone, remember how it is done in our training! Surround him and finish him off!"
"Good, that's more like it. The whole lot of you, come at me. I suggest you hurry up. If I get tired —— I won't be able to hold back my strength."
The screams of 600 men echoed through Fort Hauport.
Night——





"I can tell from how they mustered. The standard of the Seventh Army expedition unit is still acceptable. But those who stayed behind in this fort are trash."

"I don't deny that. That's why no one complain even when a woman like me became the commander. The soldiers here aren't elite like the Fourth Army."

"What then? Raise the white flag and surrender when Estaburg invades?"

"Erm..."

"We will all die one day. Since they are soldiers, they should at least die in a battle with the enemy. Being shot dead while running away will be absolutely disgraceful."

"I-I know... But that's too harsh..."

"You should know very well that normal training will never make those lot become standard soldiers."

"Such a thing!"

Marion went closer to the bed.

Unexpectedly, she wasn't wearing a uniform, but a dress that bares her shoulder. Just like an aristocratic lady.



Jerome smiled wryly. "If you want to use the dagger you hid behind you effectively, then hide your killing intent." "You knew...!?" Marion whose face turned completely red stabbed with her dagger. Acting decisively, not bad. Jerome grabbed her wrist that was holding the dagger. Her wrist was so slender that it would probably break if he exert a bit more force. As expected of a woman's wrist power. Unlike that Princess. "Well, it's that princess who is strange. This is normal." "I-I will kill you!" "Don't you want to defend the fort? How are you going to do that if you kill me?" "Everyone will be dead before that if they undergo such harsh training! I will protect everyone!"

Jerome grabbed the front of collar and pulled her in.
"Retard! Those lots are so useless because you're overly protective of them!"
"Overly protective!?"
"Just watch me carefully! As long as I don't think you all are hopeless, I won't give up on all of you just yet!"
"Think I'm hopeless give up!?"
"What people really think isn't expressed through words, but actions—— I'm training them, and you want to stop me. Who do you think the troops will choose for the sake of becoming stronger? Who will they choose to win the war? Harsh training? They survived. So they will be stronger tomorrow!"
"I, I Everyone"
Marion trembled and couldn't say a word.
The bugle for reverie was blown before dawn.
Training just like yesterday began.

```
"Hyaaaa—!!"
  "Gyaaa——!!"
 Jerome swung his fist and a soldier flew.
 At this moment, several swords slashed at him.
 Many people was sent flying the day before, so they got used to it. They were
not fazed when a couple of them were knock into the air.
  "Die, black knight!"
  "Hmmp... Naive."
 Jerome drew his sword, parried all the incoming swords and kicked the
stomach of his opponent.
 "Blarrghhh—!!"
 The training continued until breakfast, and then went on until the bell
signalling the night fall.
 One month passed.
```

Fortress City Marschtedt——

Morning, Coignieres practiced his sword in the courtyard.

Even though he spent most of his day on war conference and administrative paper work.

But on the battlefield, the thing he could count on was his own body. So he couldn't relax on his training.

"Hah! Hee!"

"Morning, you are full of drive."

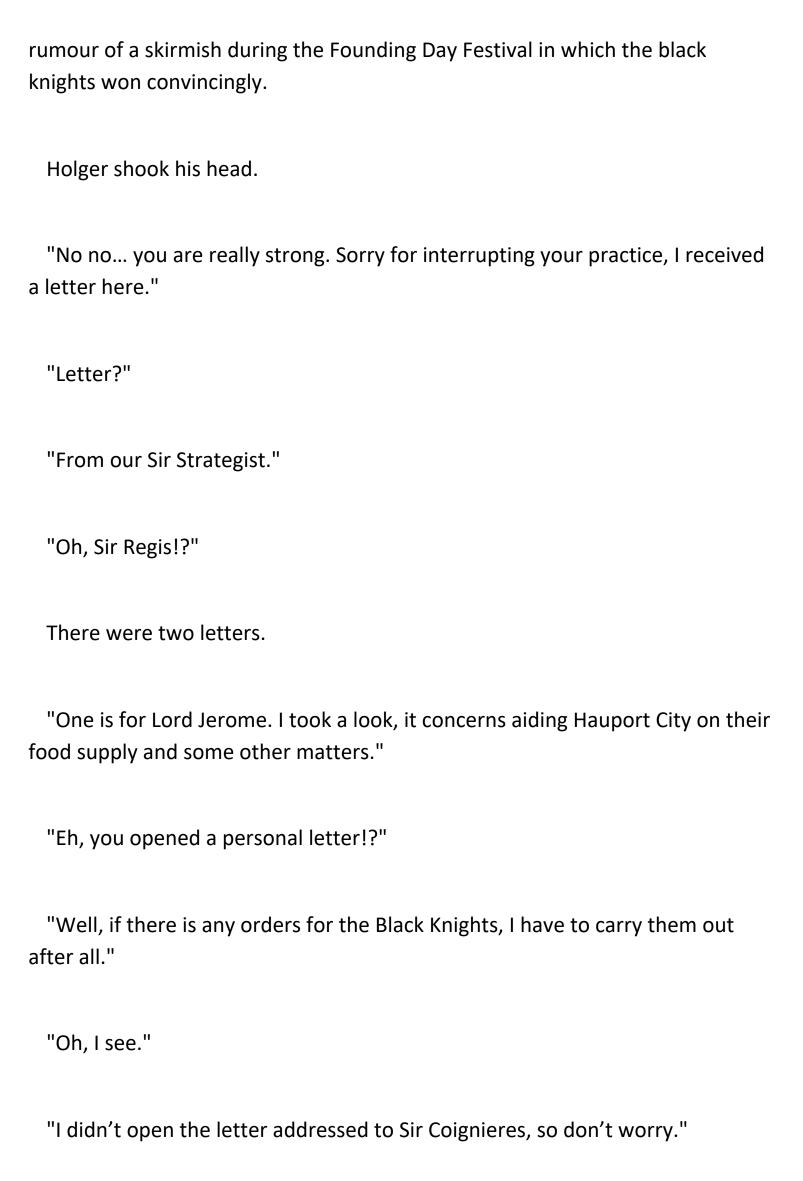
The man who came to the courtyard was the acting commander of the black knights—— Holger.

After wiping his sweat with a towel handed to him by a maid, Coignieres said with a smile.

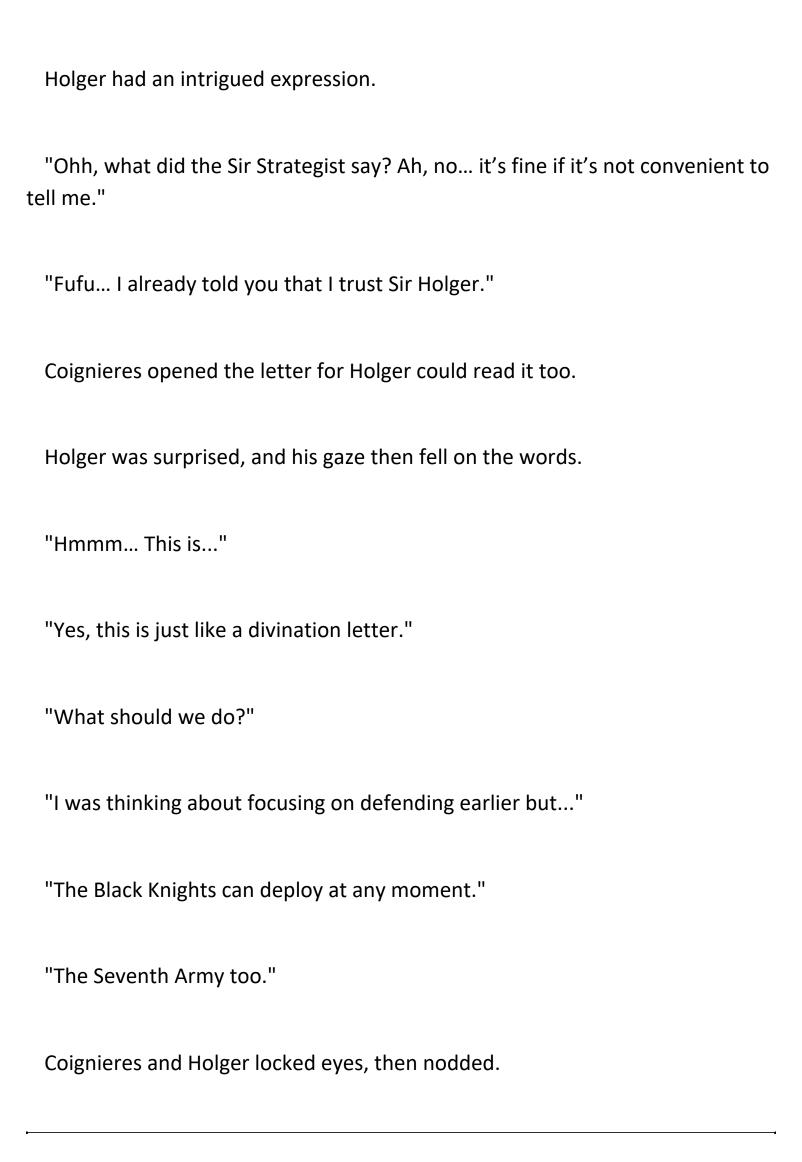
"You flatter me... This must be child's play for Sir Holger."

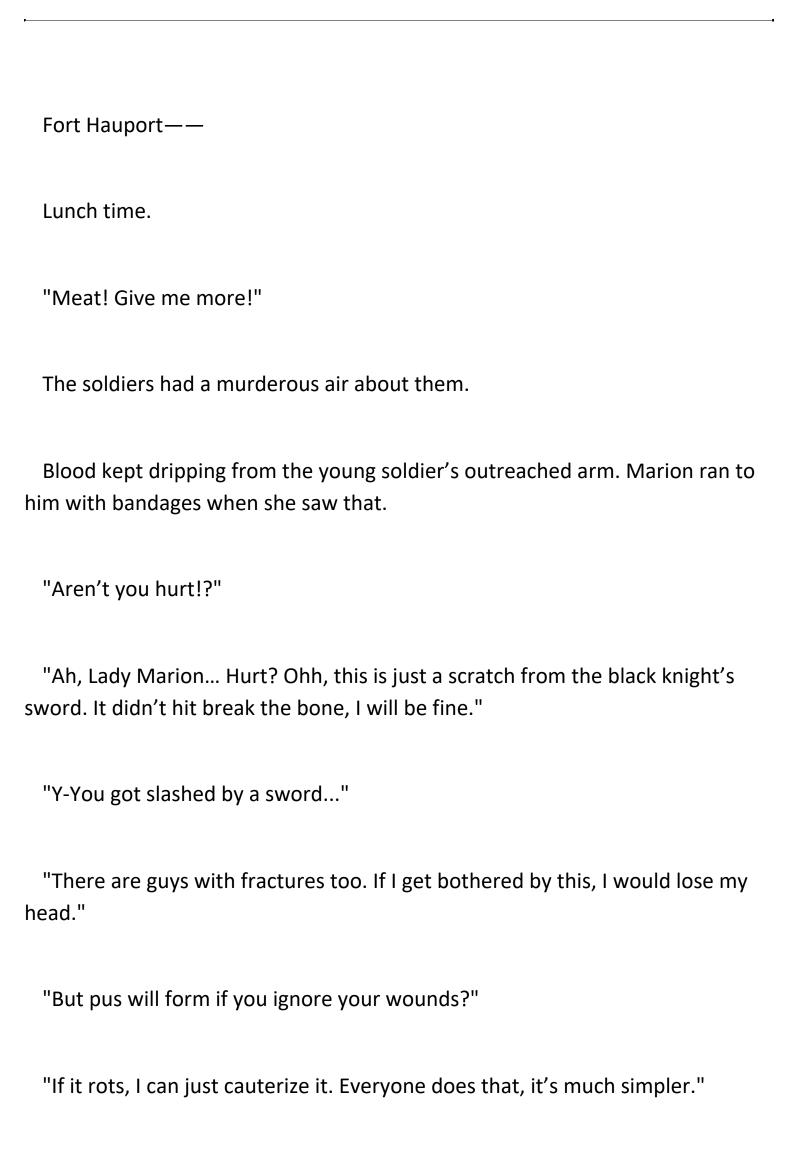
The black knights had the reputation of being the strongest knights in the Empire after all.

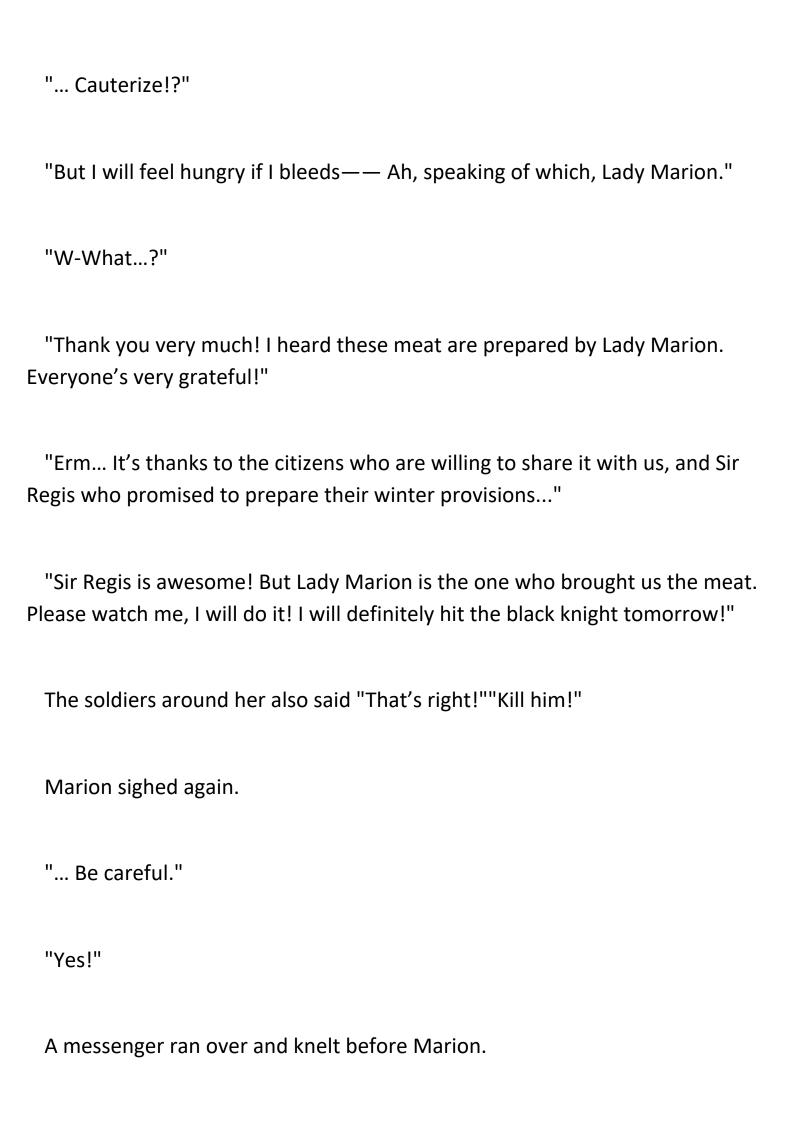
The First Army was said to be the strongest in the past, but there was a



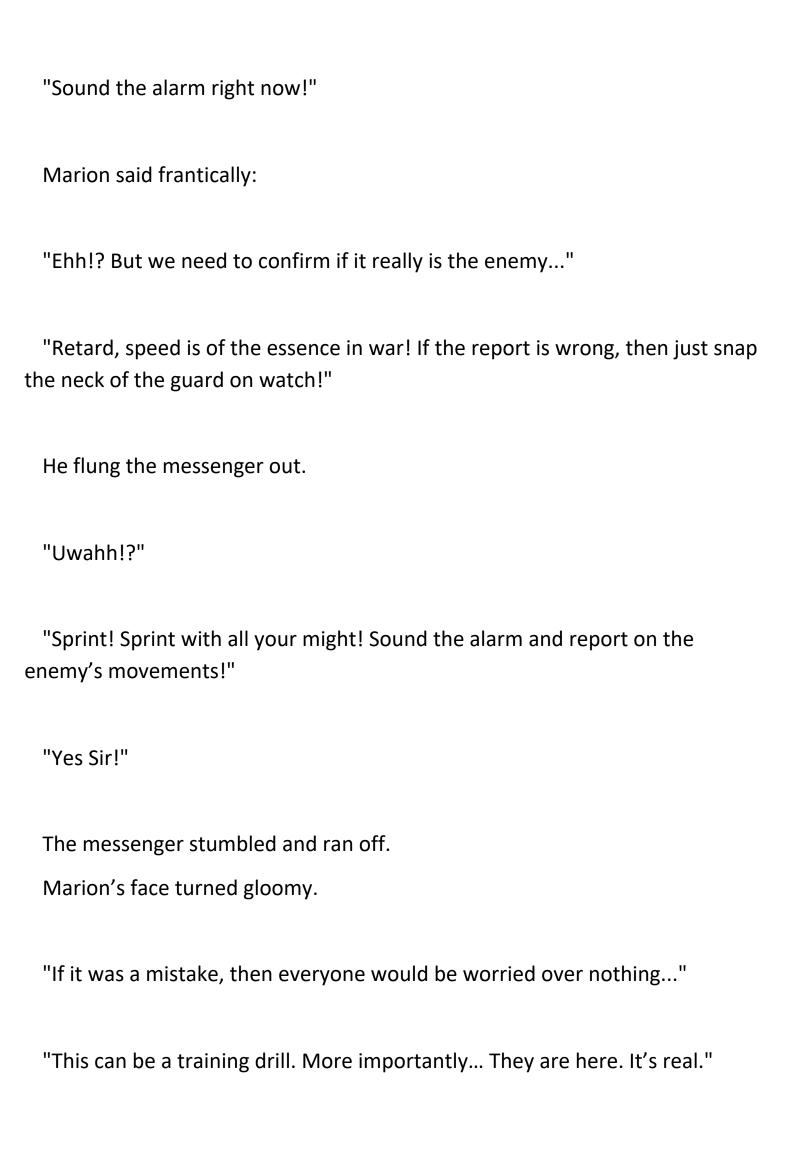


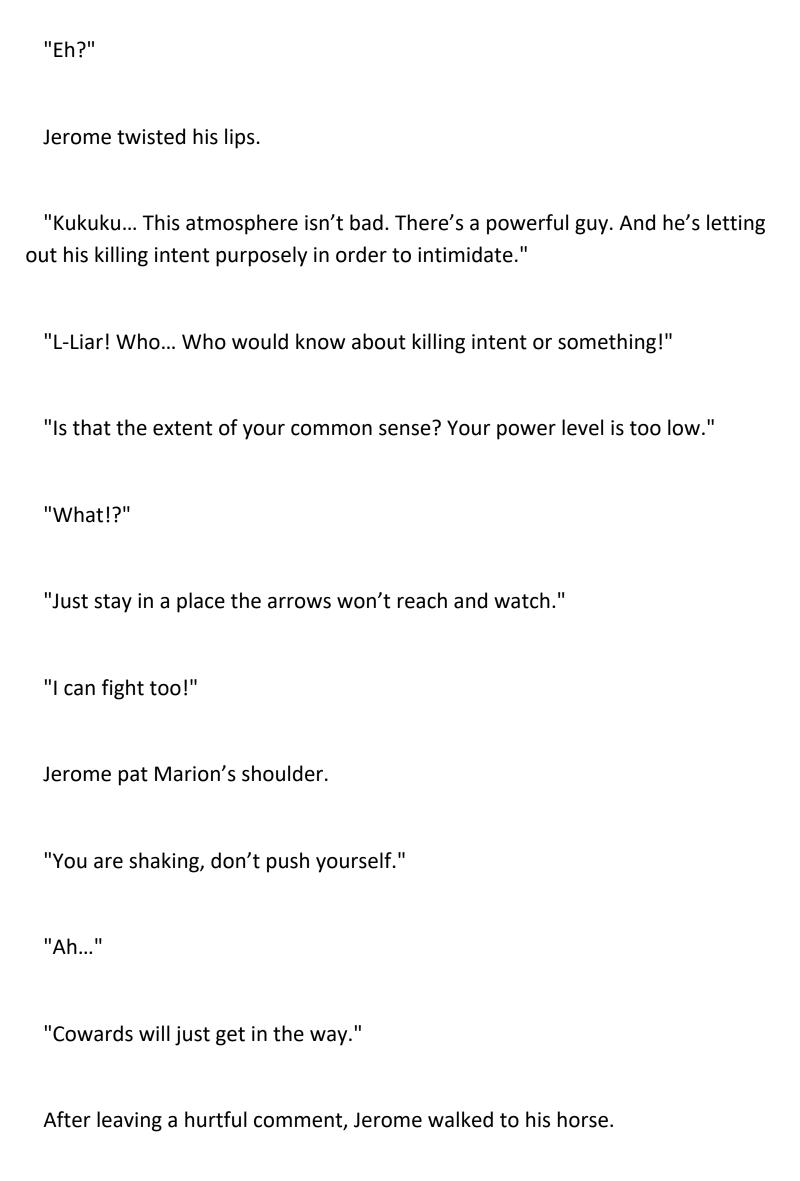




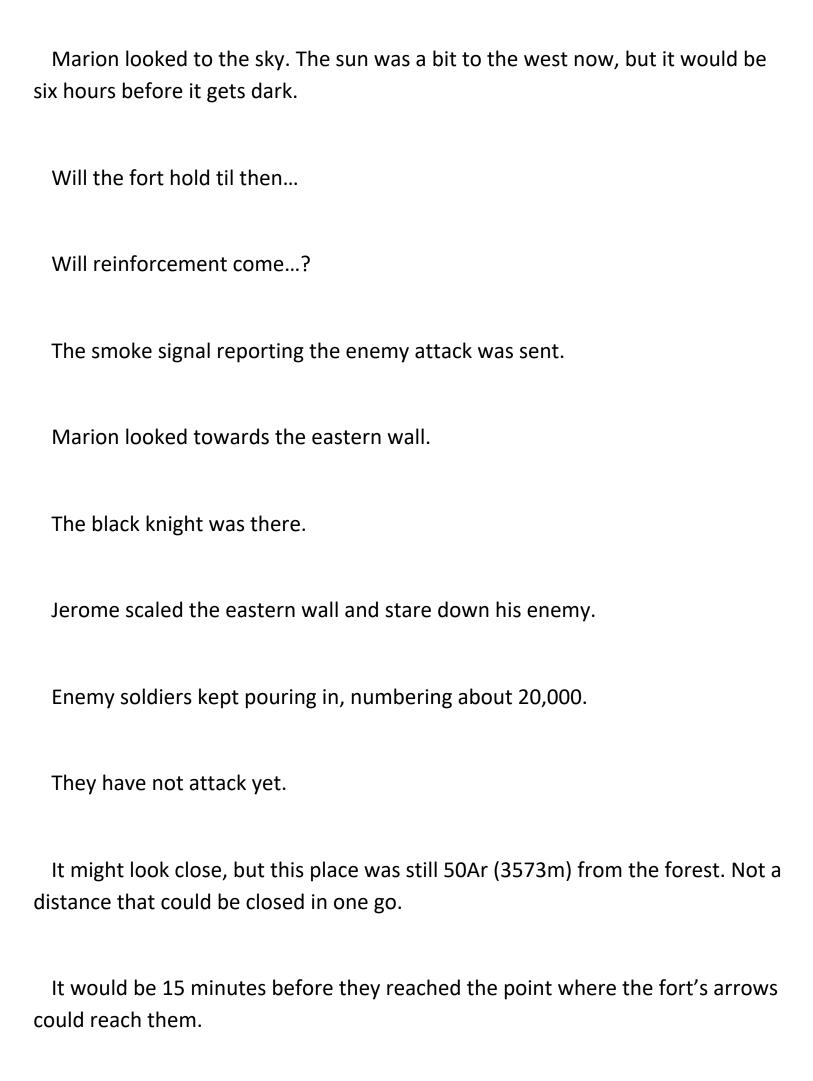


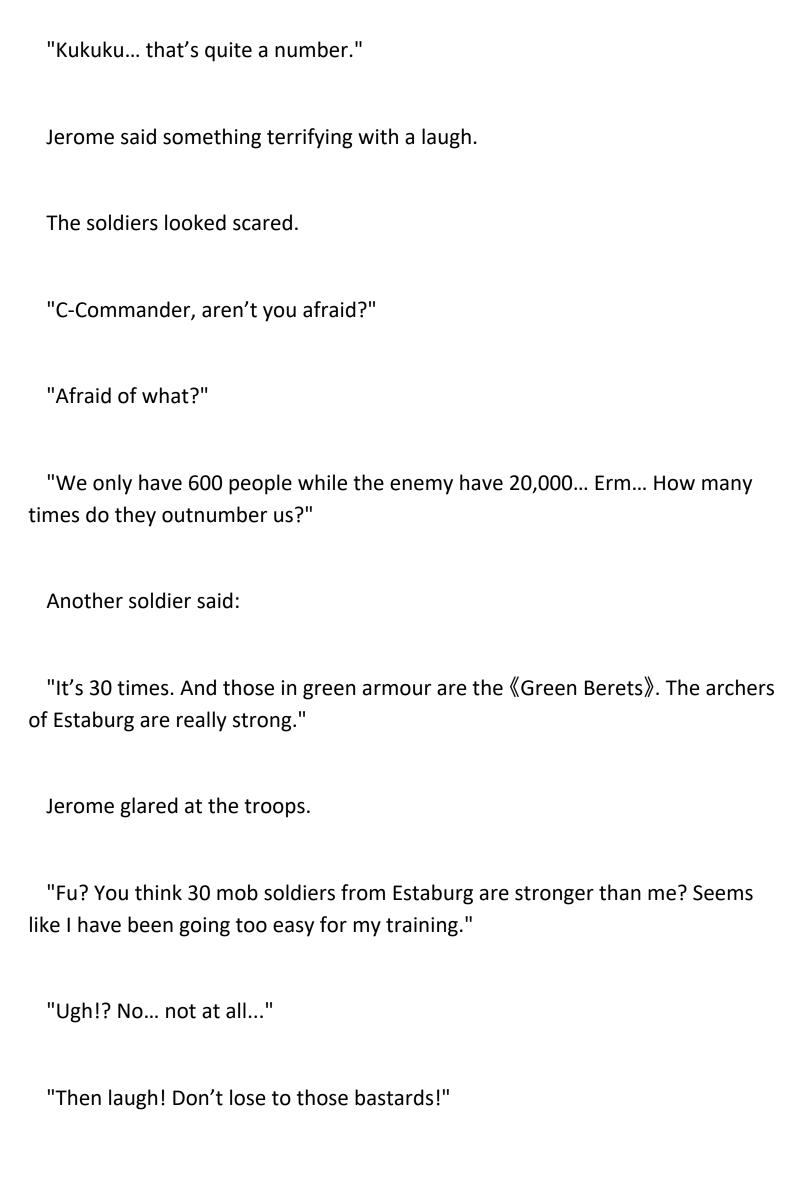
I'm the deputy commander now
—— Even though that was what Marion was thinking, it must be important since the messenger was in such a rush.
"What's the matter!?"
"A large group of men was sighted in the forest! It might be an enemy attack!"
"E-Enemy attack!?"
"What should we do!?"
"Are you sure about that? We need to grasp their numbers first"
A face suddenly appeared—— it was Jerome.
He grabbed the messenger by the collar.
"You must report to me, the commander first."
"M-My apologies."
He apologized with a bitter face.
Jerome roared:





A moment later, the alarm rang. "Enemy attack———!! Enemy attack———— It's the Estaburgers!!" As they had planned ahead of time, the gate on the city side was opened to let the citizens in. They were allowed to squeeze into the courtyard. There was no roof, no place to lie down, and only the muddy ground. It wasn't a place one could stay for several days. But staying here was better than staying in the city and being slaughtered by the enemy. The citizens weren't unhappy about this, and even offered words of encouragement to the troops. A messenger ran over. "Lady Marion, we have rounded up all the citizens! Closing the west gate now!" "Good, hurry. And inform Sir Coignieres about the attack." "We will send a smoke signal!" "Right, make it quick."





"Y-Yes!"

The atmosphere changed.

The soldiers intimidated by the 20,000 enemy started laughing. Soon, others joined them.

Forcefully laughing to suppress one's fear was better than trembling.

Jerome thought:

—— They actually committed their main forces all at once huh.

Their intention was to win an overwhelming debut battle, then ride the momentum to continue their attack.

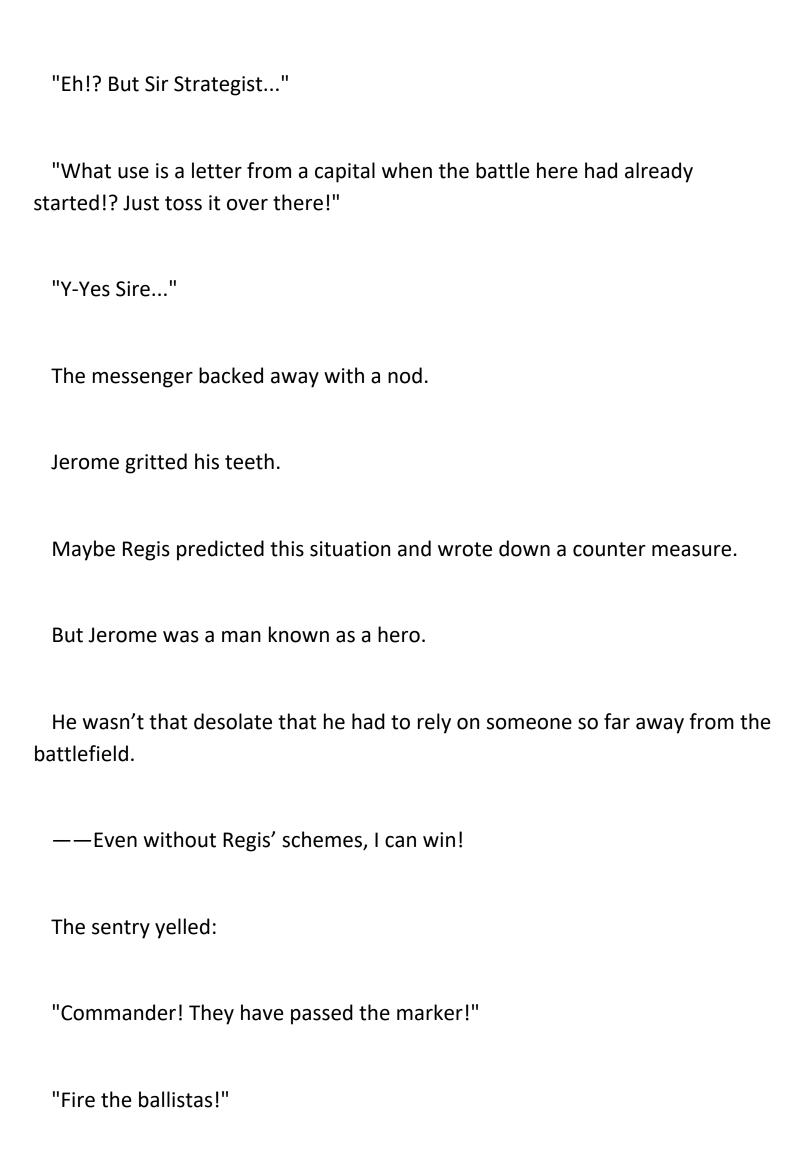
The Estaburg soldiers wore green armour and held bows. Even though they were attacking a fort, they were using mid poundage bows. Those were probably their preferred weapon.

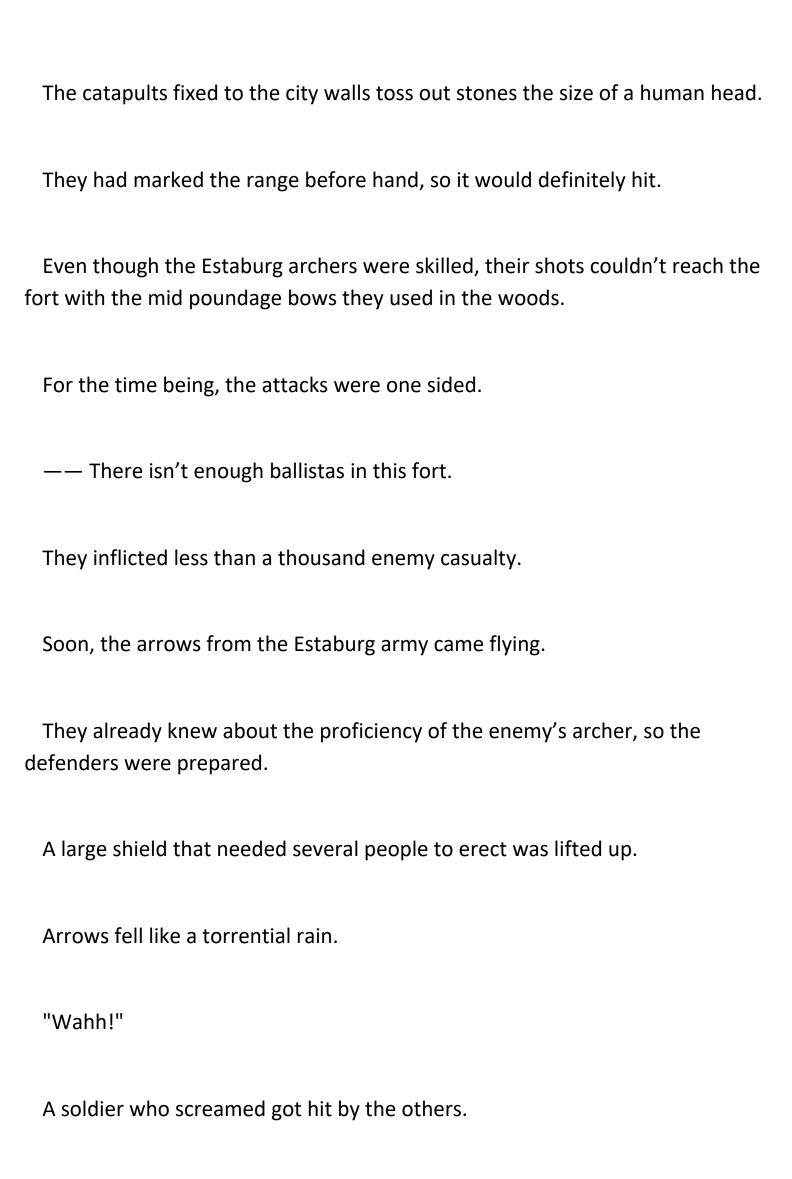
The enemy commander was no fool. He knew no weapons were better than the ones they were used to.

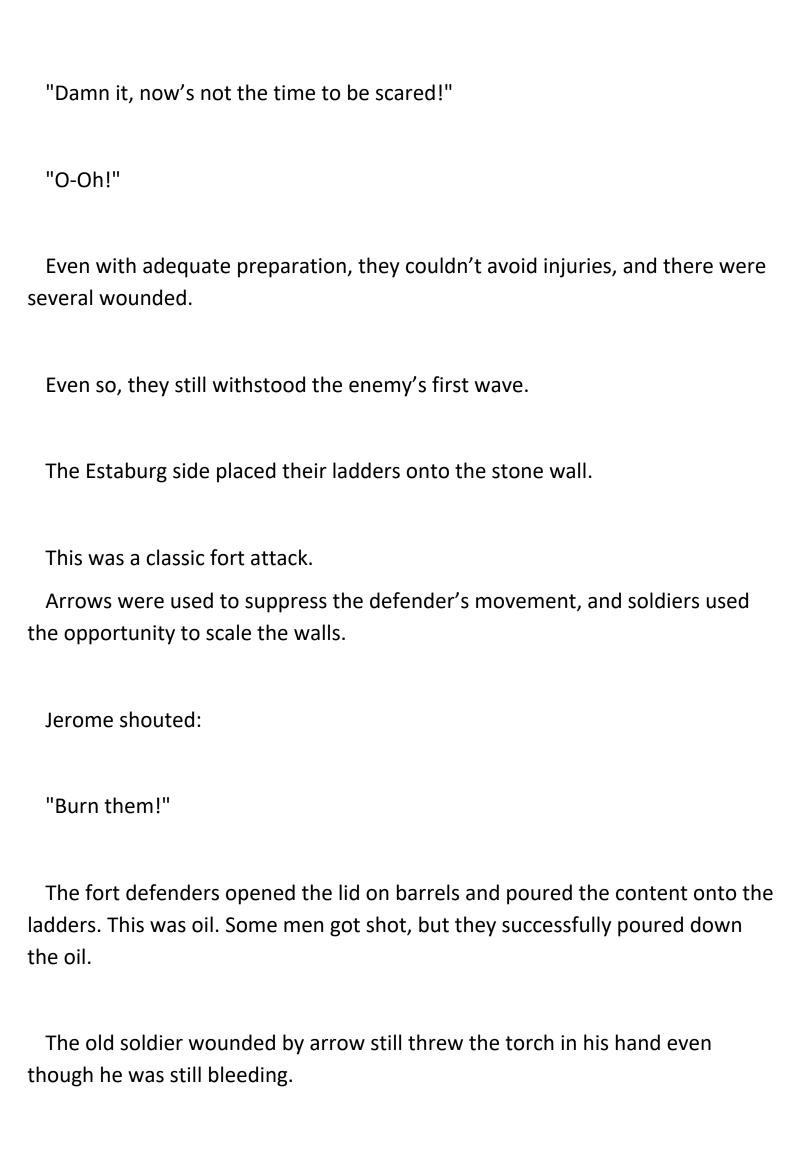
When sprinting in the forest, a long bow gets in the way. It was more effective to use a shorter bow in the woods.

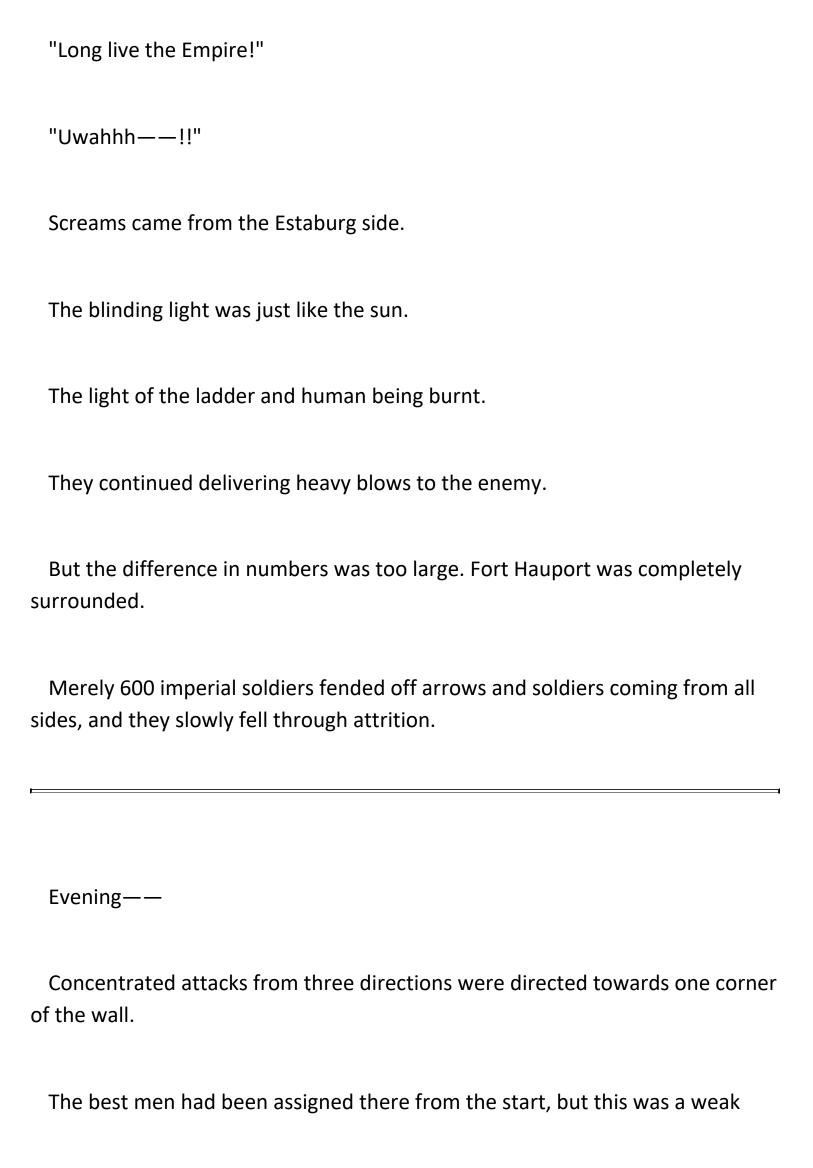
It was very difficult to watch out for arrows shot by enemies hiding in the

shadows of the woods. On top of that, the grass and roots made the terrain worse, making it hard to close in with the enemy. A clumsy pursuit might run into an ambush. Archers in the woods were a formidable foe. However, those Estaburg soldiers had come out onto the plains. This was a good chance. It was impossible for the 600 men to proactively attack the 20,000 enemy, but they could definitely hit the enemy's vanguard hard. A messenger ran to him. "Commander! A letter from the capital!" "What?" "It's from the strategist Sir Regis d'Auric!" — At a time like this!? Jerome glared at him fiercely, which made the innocent messenger yelp. "Tchh... Later! A battle is ongoing right now!"









point right from the beginning.

After the guards around there died, they couldn't keep the ladders away any longer and the Estaburg soldiers finally scaled the wall.

"Gyaahh!!"

The Imperial soldiers draw their bows and unleashed arrows of fury.

"Warrghh!"

It was a short period of time, but the soldiers who had been through the hellish training wasn't afraid of battle.

But the enemy came up the ladders one after another.

The number of enemies appearing outnumber their dead.

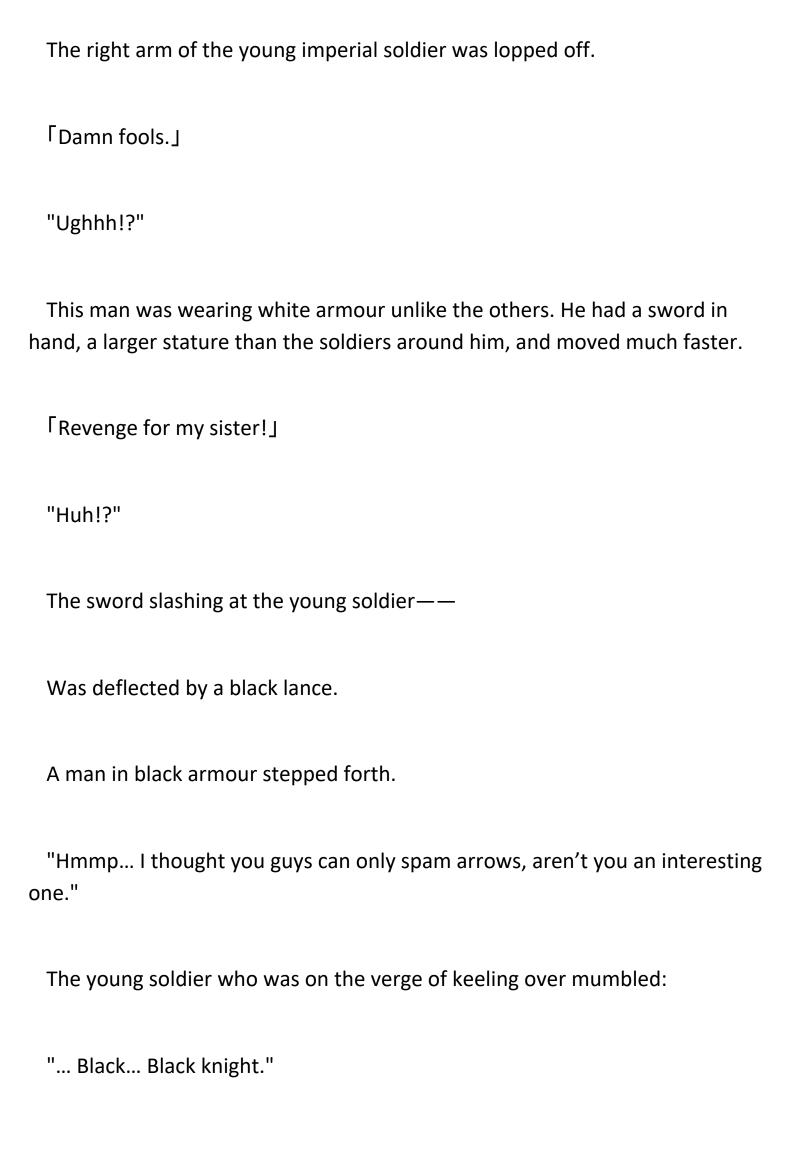
Despite that, not a single imperial soldier turn to flee.

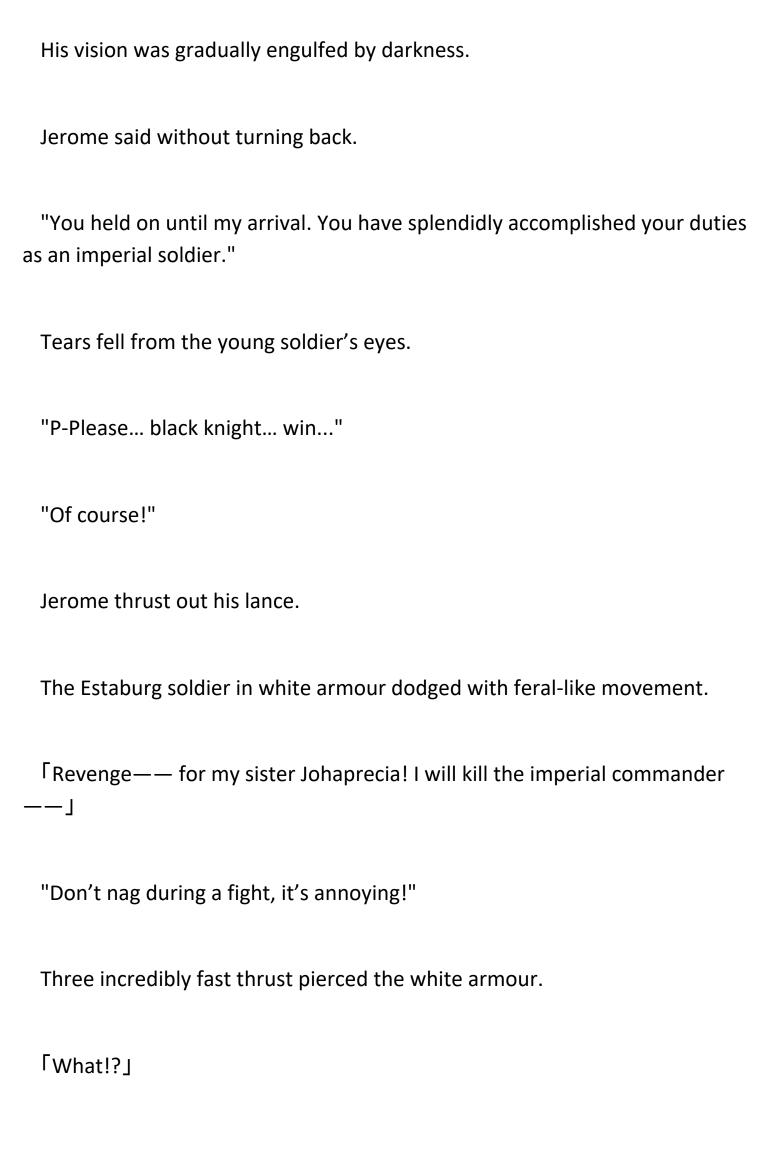
"We can't lose! If we lose the fort will fall!"

"Don't joke with me! We are the Belgaria army! We won't lose to Estaburg trash!"

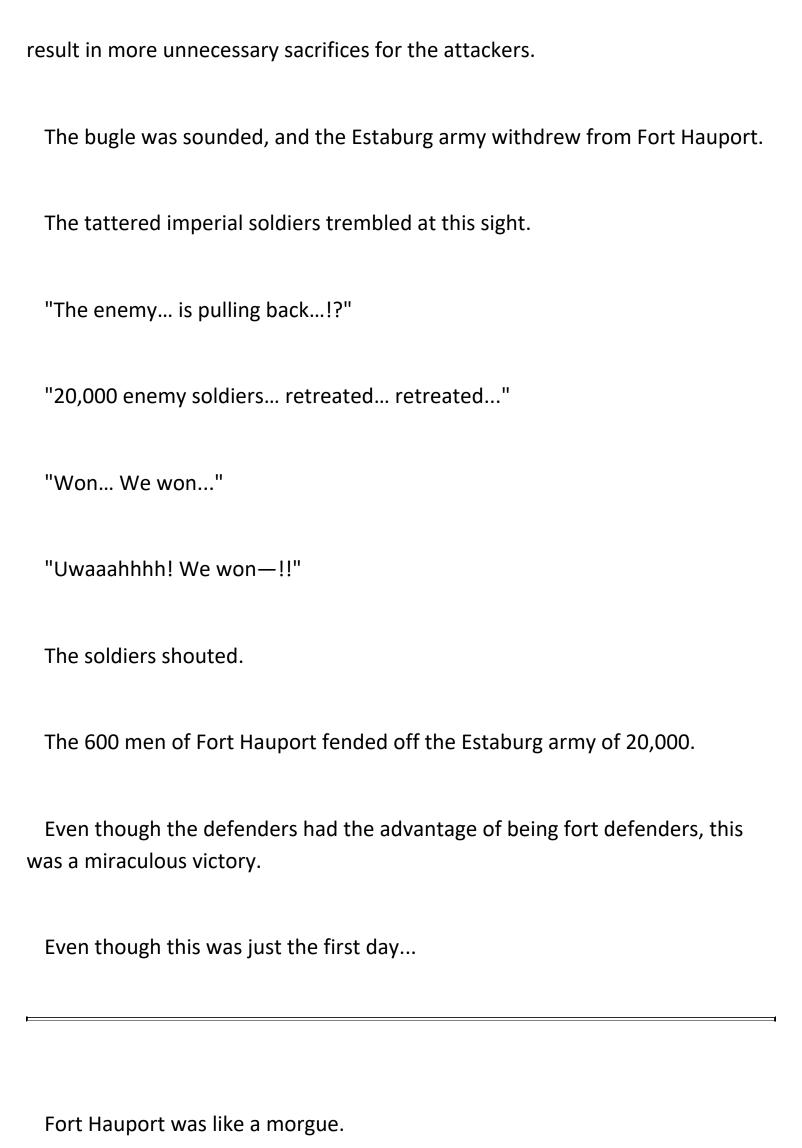
The young soldier stabbed with his pike.

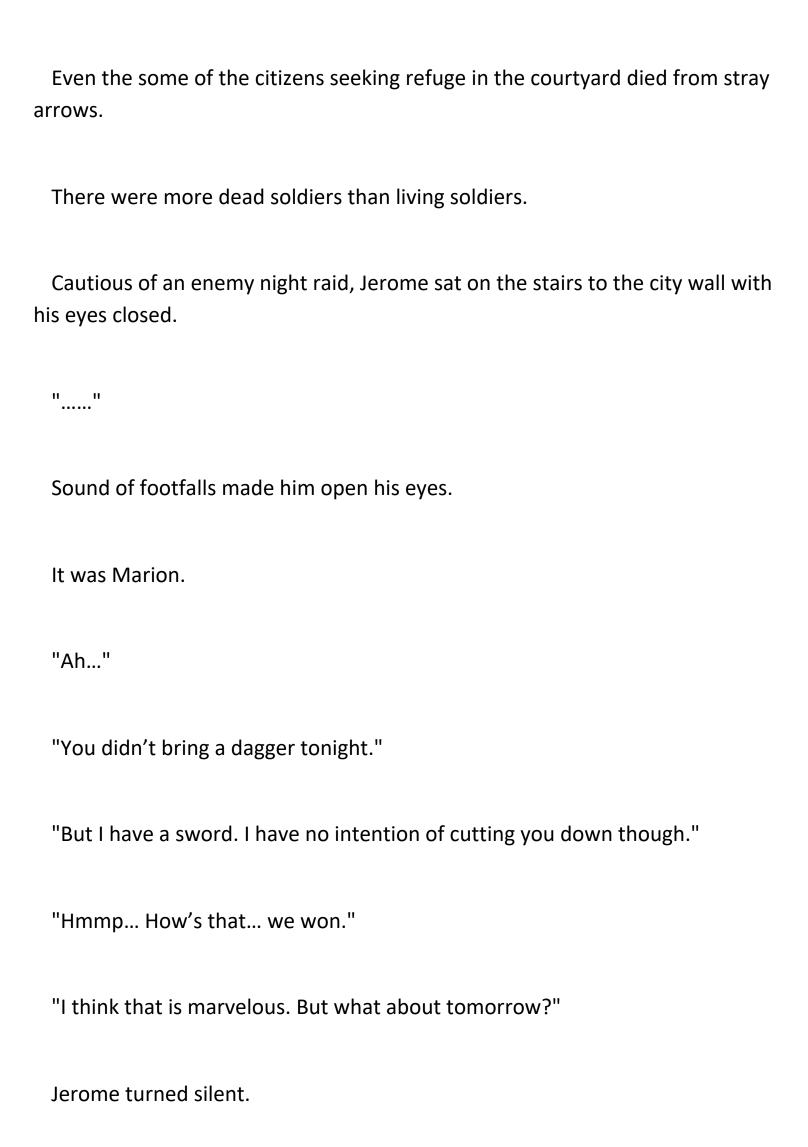


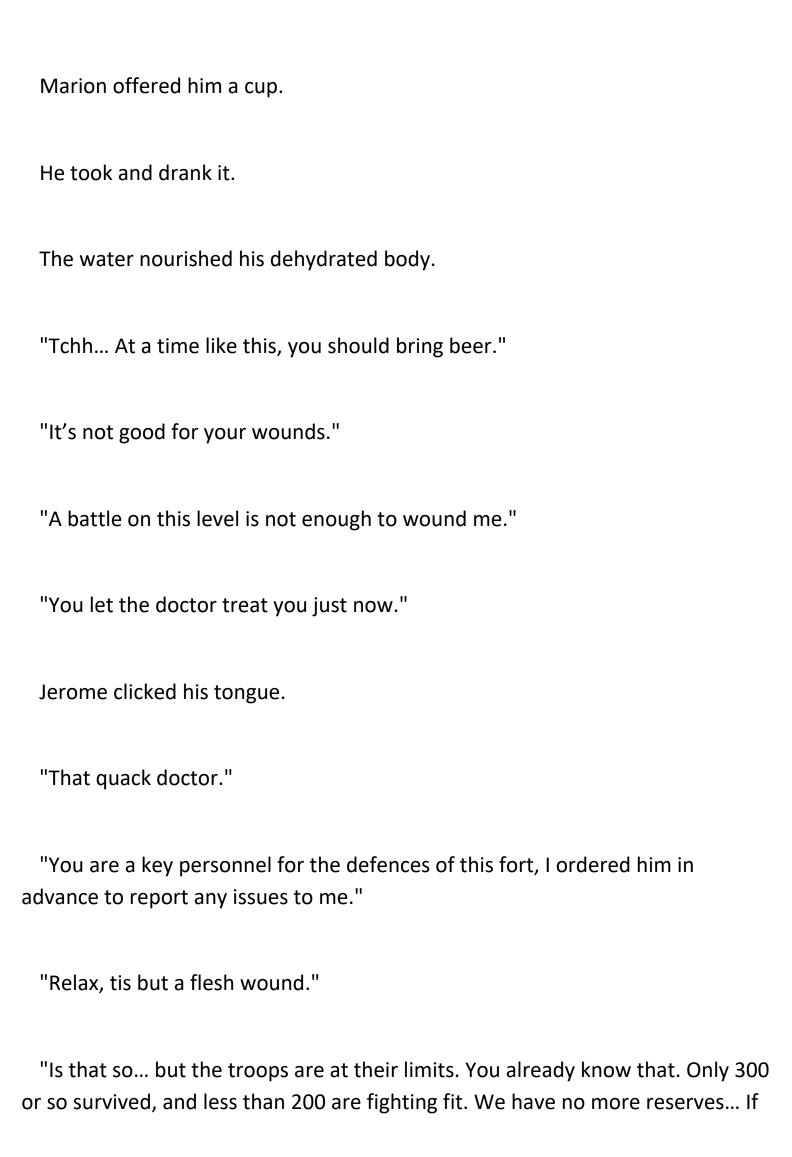


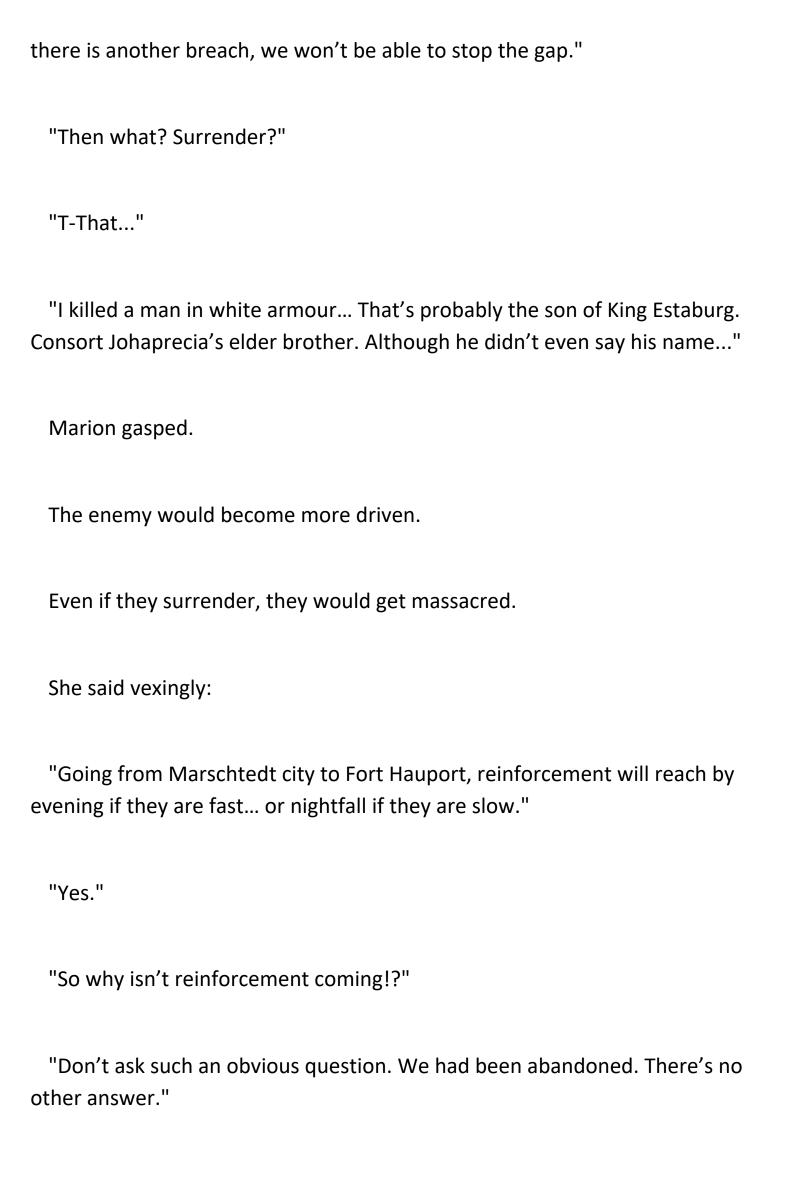


"Woahhhh!" Jerome roared furiously. He knocked the white armoured soldier that was gushing blood off the wall. He then thrust with a speed that the surrounding archers didn't have the time to react to. He kept killing the enemy soldiers scaling the wall, until the reserves finally arrived. Although they were all old timers, they weren't fazed by the corpses on the ground and calmly doused the ladders and lit them up. When the Estaburg side saw that their allies on the wall had been wiped up, they started shooting arrows again. By this time, the defenders had erected wooden shields. Jerome lowered his gaze. The young soldier by the stone wall had collapsed. He won't ever move again. The sun setted. When night falls, they wouldn't be able to see where their arrows were landing and wouldn't know if their allies had scaled the walls. That would just



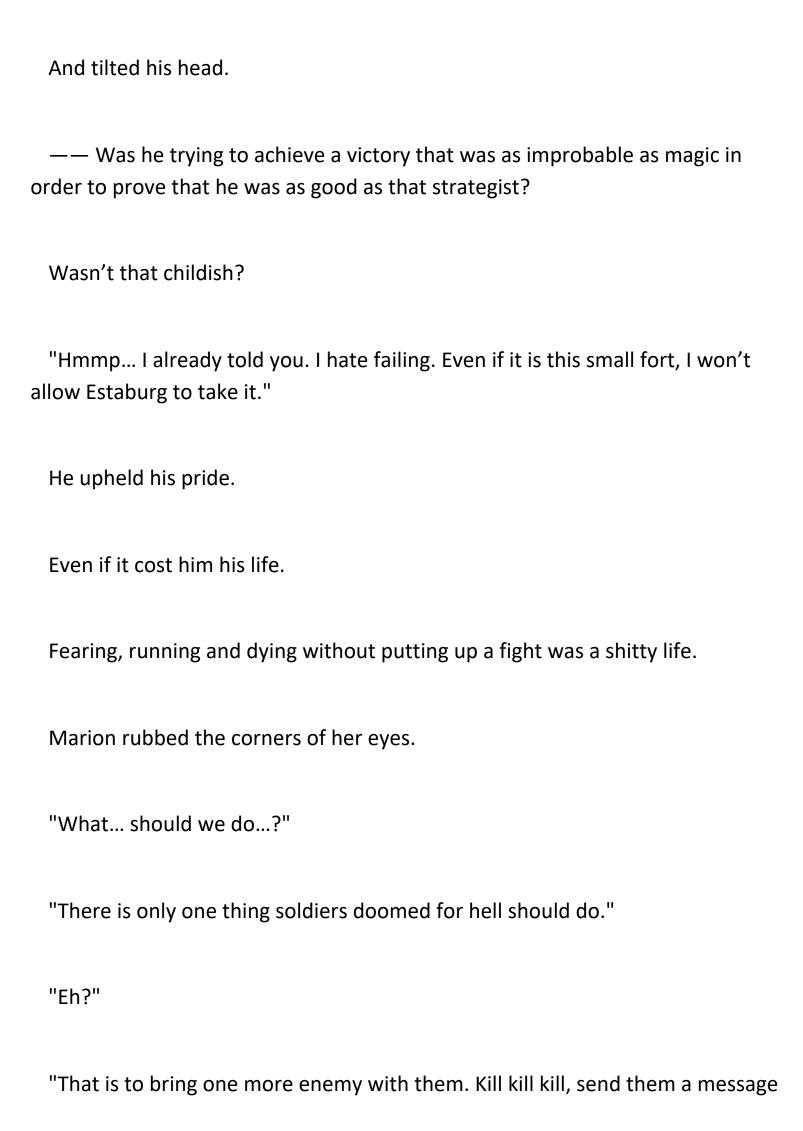




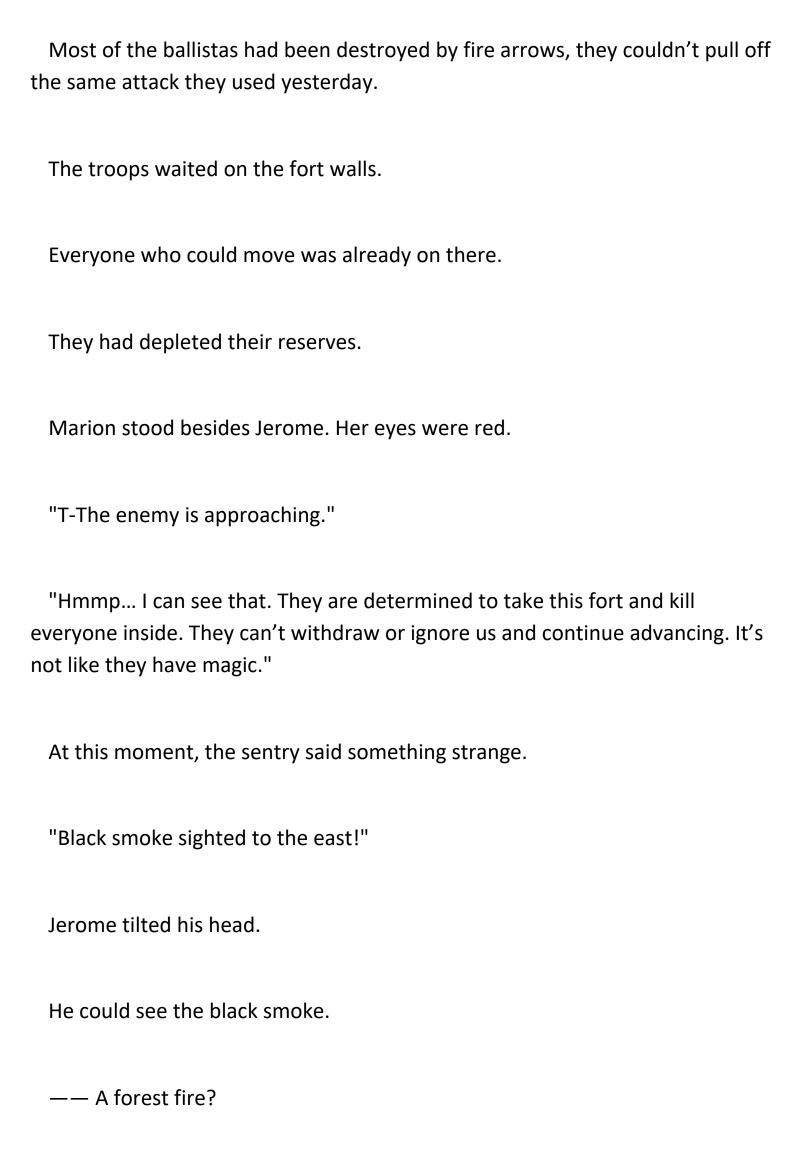


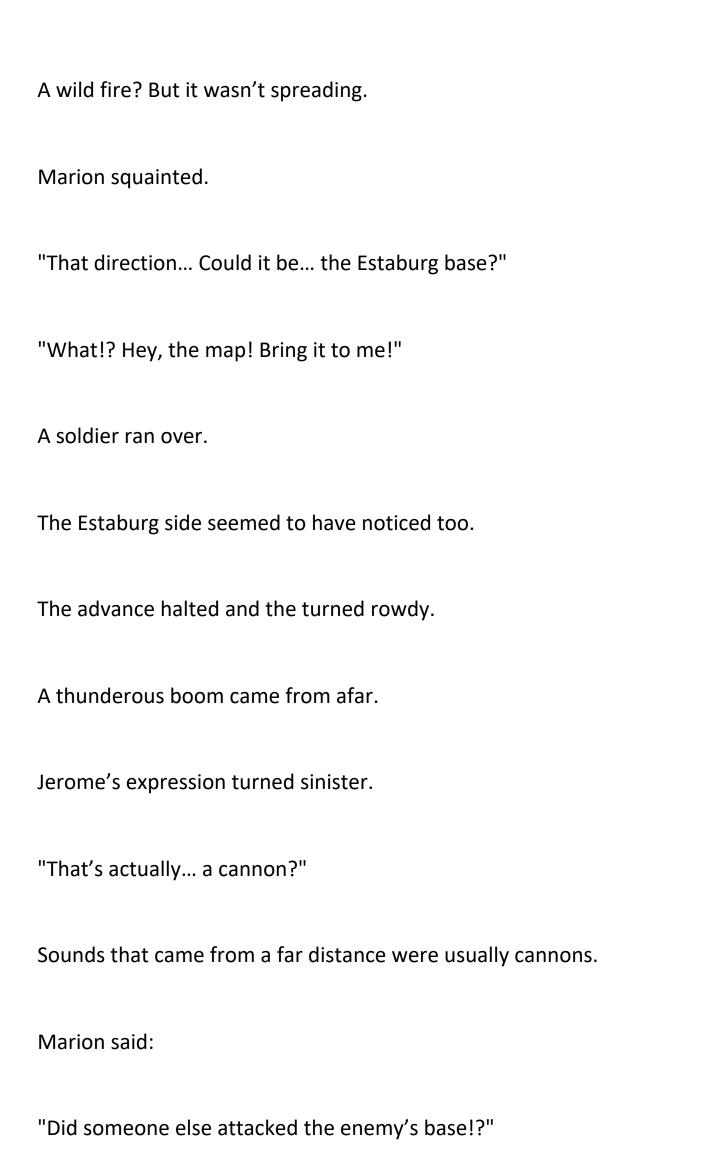
"Why!?" "In the first place, this is a fort that should be abandoned. And the enemy numbered 20,000 while the Seventh Army can only mobilize 13,000 men. Even if reinforcements come, they would be overwhelmed by the enemy instead." Even if they could fend off the enemy, they would pay a heavy price and make it harder to maintain the frontline. Abandoning this place was an obvious decision. "Ugghhh... I know... I know. But are they really going to turn a blind eye to us...?" Marion's tears fell. Jerome didn't expect any reinforcement. However, he did consider the possibility that the black knights would come. He felt that he was abandoned. "This is depressing." "... Why did you come here? You aren't born in Hauport in the first place."

Jerome crossed his arms.









Not just anyone. The only group that could prepare cannons and mount an attack on the Estaburg's base could only be the Seventh Army. The troops noticed too. "It's the Seventh Army! General Coignieres!" A map was brought to Jerome. He stared at the map. —— From Fort Hauport to Estaburg's base. The distance was 5 Li (22km). The sound of cannons might be audible. Jerome couldn't tell if it really was audible. And of course it was the same for the Estaburg army. But the sound of cannons was coming from the direction of their base and

there were signs of fire.

Even a retard would understand.

While their main forces was attacking a small fort, their own base had been attacked by the Empire.

When they saw their allies debuting from an unexpected place, the expression of the soldiers in the fort brightened up.

Only Jerome was looking at the battle.

"Damn it... This scheme is used to divert the enemy's next actions!"

The sentry yelled:

"Turning! The Estaburg army is turning! They are turning east and leaving!"

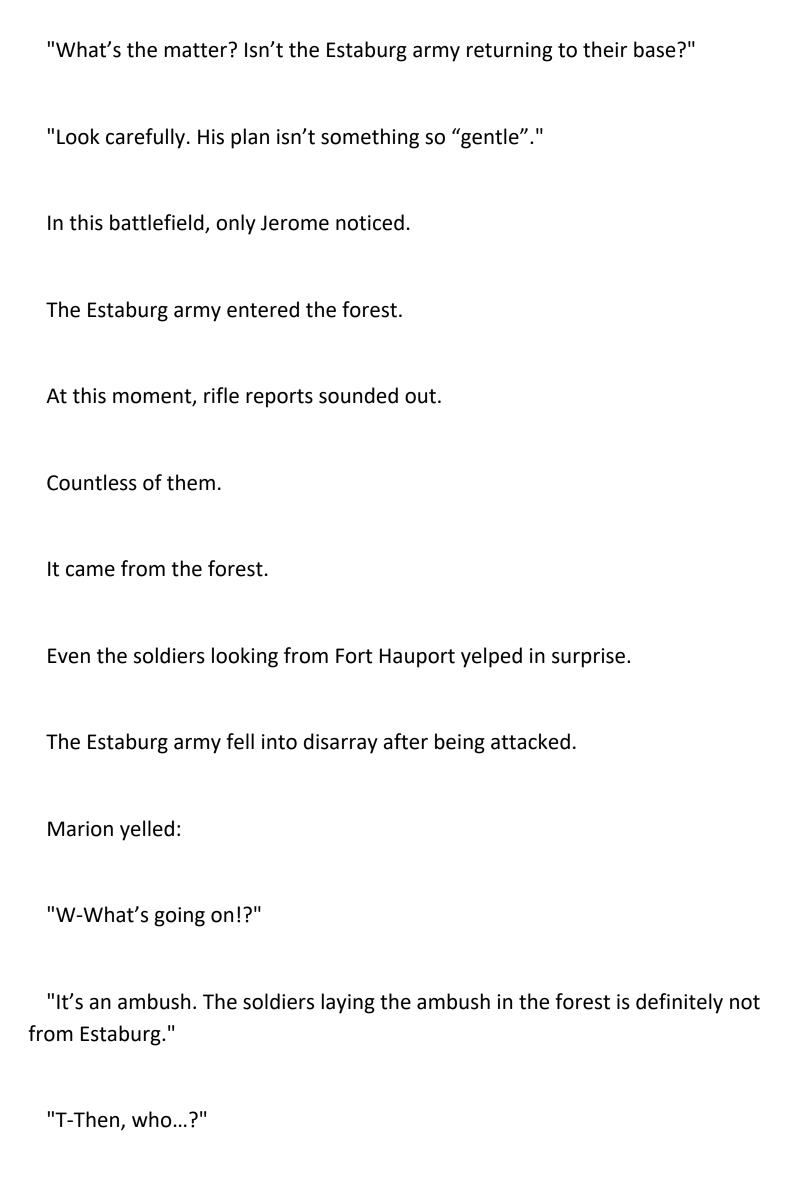
Warrrghhh!! The soldiers cheered like they did yesterday.

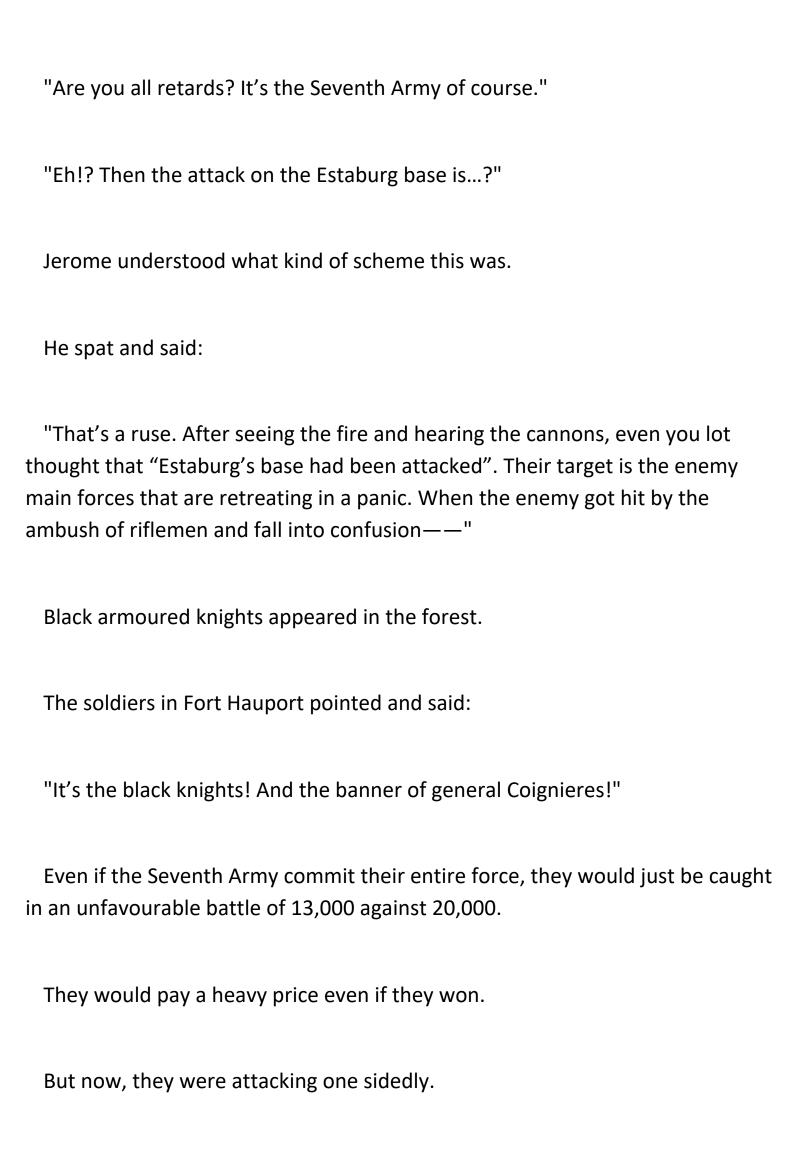
Jerome roared:

"Don't relax! Things are just starting!"

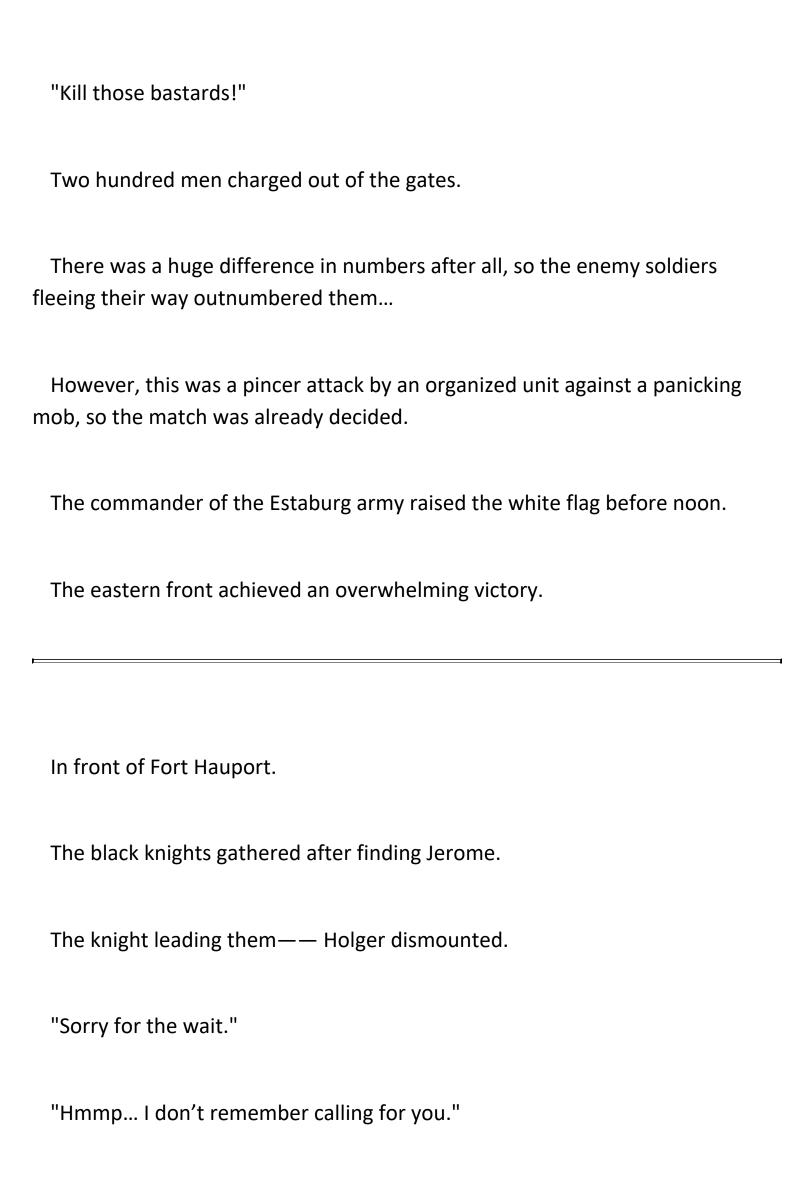
"Ehh?"

Marion who was as happy as the troops opened her eyes wide.









"Then we have poked our nose into your business. Sorry about that." "Is this that guy's scheme?" "Yes it is... You haven't read that letter yet huh. Or he didn't write the details clearly on his letter to you?" "Tch... So it happened again." It's Regis' scheme again. Were the actions of both friend and foe within his grasp!? Jerome glared at the ground. Holger smiled wryly and said: "Sir Regis' plan was based on the assumption that Fort Hauport could hold for one day. We set off from Marschtedt and went the long way around the battlefield to set our traps. If there wasn't enough time, the plan wouldn't have worked." "Tch... Did he predicted the valiant struggles of the troops too!?" "Well, that too... But I think his trust in Lord Jerome plays a big part." Regis seemed to have grasped the situation from Coignieres and Jerome's



